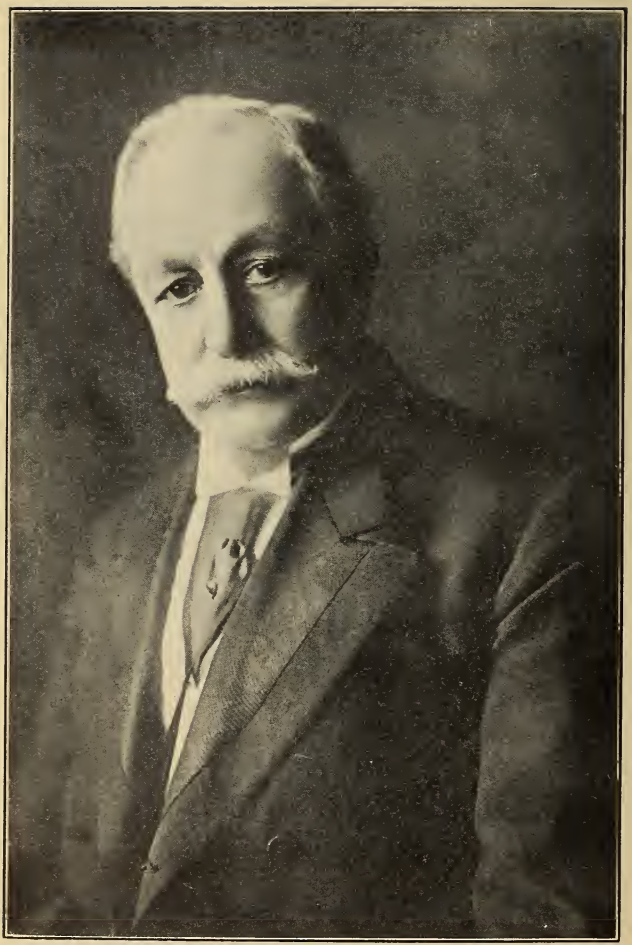
THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

MASTERS OF THE SHOW



AUGUSTUS PITOU

Frontispiece

MASTERS OF THE SHOW

AS SEEN IN RETROSPECTION BY ONE WHO HAS BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH THE AMERICAN STAGE FOR NEARLY FIFTY YEARS

BY

AUGUSTUS PITOU

"We are no other than a moving row
Of Magic Shadow-shapes that come and go
Round with the Sun-illumin'd Lantern held
In Midnight by the Master of the Show."

—Omar Khayyám.

NEW YORK
THE NEALE PUBLISHING COMPANY
1914

PN 2256
.P5

Copyright, 1914, by
THE NEALE PUBLISHING COMPANY

MAY 5 1914

$2.00

©Cl.A369955

201

DEDICATED
TO MY FRIEND
DOCTOR HEINRICH STERN

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Augustus Pitou . . . . . *Frontispiece*

FACING PAGE

Lotta as the Marchioness 14

Lawrence Barrett in "Francesca da Rimini" . 40

Edwin Forrest as Damon 51

Letter of Edwin Booth to Mr. Pitou 70

Edwin Booth as Hamlet 77

Mary Anderson 97

Maggie Mitchell as Fanchon 104

Adelaide Neilson as Juliet 106

A. L. Erlanger 136

C. B. Jefferson 140

Joseph Jefferson as Caleb Plummer 143

F. F. Proctor 177

PREFACE

The story of my life before I became associated with the stage may be briefly told.

I was born in New York City, in Reade Street, in 1843. My father was a Frenchman and my mother an American born of French parents. When very young I was sent to school in the Primary Department of the Mechanics Institute on Chambers Street, just east of Center Street, and when my family moved up town I attended the West Seventeenth Street Public School, which is still in existence. After I had been graduated from the highest class a position was obtained for me in the office of a wholesale drygoods house. Within a year, however, this work grew irksome. My mind was at that time filled with the adventures of Captain Marryat's heroes: the sea called to me, and the call was answered.

My first voyage was to Australia as boy before the mast in the clipper ship *Sweepstakes*. My last voyage, six years later, was as second mate of a full-rigged ship, called the *William Worth* and commanded by Captain Clements.

On our voyage home from Antwerp the ship, after encountering heavy gales, foundered in the Atlantic Ocean about fifty miles south of the banks of Newfoundland. We took to the boats, were picked up two days later by a brigantine bound from the West Indies to St. Johns, N. F., and four days afterward the captain of the brigantine ran into Boston and put us ashore there.

A few months later Captain Clements obtained command of another ship and engaged me as first mate. One evening, a few days before the time set for sailing, my mother begged me, with tears, to give up my sea life. She said that she had all her children with her but me, and that during my voyages from home she had had many sleepless nights.

Captain Clements sailed without me.

My next occupation was in Oil City during the pioneer days of the oil business, and there I began life a second time. The firm of Parker and Pitou bought oil at the wells and shipped it to Pittsburg. For a time we made considerable money.

During the winter months of 1865 and 1866 we bought,— as did all but one firm,—thousands of barrels of oil and stored it on our landings, ready for shipment to Pittsburg when the ice would break up in the river and

navigation would be opened. Rockefellers & Andrews,—the Rockefellers in the firm being John D. and William,—whose landing was near ours, was the only firm that did not buy much oil that winter. Their landing was comparatively empty when the great spring flood of 1866 came and swept the oil from our landings into the raging torrent of the Alleghany. There was no such thing as insurance at that time. And, as only a few thousand barrels of this oil were ever recovered, one year after the flood our firm, like many others, was bankrupt. This ended my career in the oil business.

John D. Rockefeller could not have foreseen the flood, but, being even then a great financier and organizer, he did foresee what the rest of us did not,—the coming decline in gold and in all values.

In the spring of 1867 Mr. J. Henry Magonigle introduced me to Edwin Booth, who engaged me for the Old Winter Garden Theater in New York City,—at a salary of eight dollars a week, which gave me a new start in life. My first performance was as the priest in "Hamlet." In that speech,—difficult for a beginner, with its shards, flints, and pebbles,—I forgot my lines, and Barton Hill, who was playing Laertes, prompted me and pulled me through. Two days later the theater was destroyed by

fire. Later the newspapers announced that a benefit would be given by Mr. Booth at the Academy of Music, New York, for the attachés of the late Winter Garden Theater. Accompanying the announcement was a notice to the company to report for a rehearsal of "Hamlet." Mr. Booth, surprised to see me at the rehearsal, interrupted the scene, and said:

"Hello; are you going to try it again?"

"Yes, sir; and I hope to get through this time."

"You are not discouraged?"

"No, sir."

The rehearsal then proceeded.

The night of the performance the stage manager told me that Mr. Booth wanted my address. About a week later a letter received from Mr. Magonigle, who was Edwin Booth's business manager, informed me that Mr. Booth had secured for me an engagement for the following season at the Walnut Street Theater, Philadelphia, at a salary of twelve dollars a week; and there my stage career virtually began in September, 1867.

CHAPTER I

Among the many stars that played annual engagements at the Walnut Street Theater while I was a member of the Company were: Maggie Mitchell, Mrs. D. P. Bowers, Frank Chanfrau, John Brougham, Edwin Forrest, Edwin Booth, Edwin Adams, Mr. Barney Williams and Mrs. Williams, Mr. W. J. Florence and Mrs. Florence, John E. Owens, John Sleeper Clarke, Lucille Western, Kate Fisher, Ada Isaac Menken, J. W. Wallack, Edwin Davenport, Lotta, and others less prominent.

The first time I saw Lotta was in San Francisco in 1860. I was then an ordinary seaman on board the clipper ship *Prima Donna*, of Boston, which was lying in the harbor loading for New York. Two other youngsters and I were given "shore leave" for a day and a night. In the evening we went to a music hall near the Alcazar, where the first part of the entertainment was a minstrel number, in which only the males had black faces. On one end of the semicircle was seated Joseph Murphy with the bones, and on the other end was Lotta with a tambourine. She was dressed in a short frock

and could not then have been more than fourteen years old. Later in the evening, when she did her specialty of songs and dances, as it was her benefit night the audience threw coins to her, which she picked up and put into a small round basket.

Five years later when I was in business in Oil City she came there to play a week's engagement, supported by Sam Jack's local stock company, and she and her mother had rooms where I was boarding. We became acquainted, and she went with me to the Jones House, the best hotel in town, to consult Bishop, the famous mind-reader. We each wrote a question on separate slips of paper, then rolled our papers into tight wads and gave them to Bishop. He took first my question and then hers in one hand, and, without opening either of the wads, wrote the answers with his other hand. Lotta refused to tell me what her question had been, nor would she tell me the answer, so I said to her jokingly: "It was the same question that all girls ask,—'When shall I be married?' or 'Will my married life be a happy one?'" She would neither acknowledge nor deny that I had guessed right. However, she never married.

Lotta was unique, petite, chic, and magnetic. She did some very clever acting as Little Nell

LOTTA

As the Marchioness

Facing page 14

and the Marchioness in a dramatization of Dickens' "Old Curiosity Shop," her scenes as the Marchioness with Dick Swiveller being replete with good eccentric comedy and character work. She and her contemporary Maggie Mitchell were great favorites, drawing large audiences, and they both retired from the stage at the height of their careers.

Maggie Mitchell had a number of plays in her repertoire, of which "Fanchon" was the most popular. She had been trained in a good school, and her art was perfect. She was as effective in high comedy as she was in sentimental and pathetic scenes.

Maggie Mitchell and Lotta are still living. I have seen them both within the past year, and it is surprising how they have retained their youthful figures and the winsome ways that charmed the public years ago.

Mr. Barney Williams and Mrs. Williams appeared in Irish plays. He was an Irish "low comedian," and she played the Colleens. They presented a play entitled "The Fairy Circle," in which the character played by Barney Williams was supposed to have died. He was in a wooded glen, surrounded by fairies, and the queen of the fairies told him that he was present in spirit only, that his body was buried, whereupon he asked to see it. A double was

required to represent the body, and I was selected for that double because I was about his size. I objected, as there was not a line to speak; nevertheless I had to take the part. My youthful indignation and humiliation were very great, for it was a super's work.

However, I determined that I would not sacrifice my moustache, but would hide it as best I could. That night when the fairy queen waved her wand and summoned the dead body to appear I came up through the center trap stretched out on a green mossy bank. The queen said:

"Behold your body!"

Mr. Williams, loud enough for the entire audience to hear him, replied:

"Well, if that's my body, it has grown a very tidy moustache since they put it under the sod."

I was given the alternative of shaving off my moustache for the next performance or of instant discharge from the company. Very sorrowfully I accepted the alternative of shaving off my moustache.

In those days stars made very little money as compared with the stars of to-day. It was the custom then for stars to take a benefit one night during their engagement in the different cities, and on these occasions they were given

a third, and sometimes a half, of the gross receipts. This was often all the money that they earned. Some of them shared the profits after the manager of the theater had first deducted his expenses for the week. The minor stars often needed their benefit money in order to pay their hotel bills and go to the next city, and the weekly receipts of the theater frequently fell below the expenses. Now and then a star would come with a new play added to his or her repertoire, and this new play usually helped to draw a crowd. What was called a skeleton manuscript,—that is, a manuscript with the star's part left out, save the cues,—and a set of parts were sent ahead to the stage manager of the local stock company, who would rehearse the play. The local actors knew nothing about the play; they simply studied their lines, and waited for the coming of the star to fill in the missing links at one or two rehearsals.

The lines of business in the stock companies were strictly defined. There were the leading man, the juvenile man, the walking gentleman, the heavy man, the old man, the low comedian, and the general utility men, who played any small parts they were cast for. Then, too, there were the leading woman, the heavy woman, the juvenile woman, the walking

lady, the soubrette, the old woman, and the utility women. The actors were familiar with their respective parts in all the Shakespearean plays, standard dramas, and comedies. One rehearsal usually sufficed to give a perfect performance as the actors had played the same parts with many stars. The dialogue had merely to be recovered, which was easily accomplished by the actors, as their capacity for memorizing was abnormally developed. Indeed, it was no unusual thing for an actor to memorize a long part, from one night to the next, and an actor once won a wager in Philadelphia by memorizing the entire front page of a local newspaper in forty-eight hours.

Some times there would be no visiting stars, for there were not enough of them to fill up the season of the theater. When this occurred the stock company would fill in the interims, once in a while doing better business than some of the stars. After playing many seasons in the same company the principal members sometimes became great local favorites, and it was not an unusual thing for the gallery boys to greet them on the street by name.

There were many actors at that time who understood the art of acting, though the prevailing method was to overemphasize and exaggerate. Violent outbursts of passion are as

frequent in life now as they were then, and our daily papers are filled with the consequences of them. If acting be "to hold the mirror up to nature," would not our present day actors, whose tendency is to subdue and suppress, be truer to life and more effective, if they gave full vent to the expression of emotions? This suppression is as poor art as was the exaggeration of the past. When emotion is truly felt it will never be unnaturally expressed by an actor whose art is good. He may lack the genius to electrify his hearers, but his art will carry conviction.

The complaint is common to-day that many actors, some holding prominent positions, are at fault in proper articulation, and sometimes in their orthoepy. Persons often say, "I like such and such an actor, but I can't always understand what he says." Words are carelessly run together, syllables are slurred, and proper emphasis is too often lacking. Stage managers in the past were most particular in this respect. They did not hesitate to correct an actor publicly at rehearsal.

It is related that an actor once said at rehearsal:

"It's very am-bi-gu-ous to me."

"No, no," interrupted the stage manager; "not am-bi-gu-ous—am-big-u-ous."

"Oh, very well," said the actor, "if you prefer it,—am-big-u-ous."

When he came off the scene he said to some of his confrères standing in the wings:

"The governor's damned particular this morning."

This same slurring of words and syllables is sometimes noticeable in the pulpit and on the forum. We surely have a right to expect correctness from those who speak in public.

Formerly the majority of actors came from the lower walks of life. Many of them were uneducated, and only a few of them were refined and cultured. The most capable, best qualified, and best informed among them came from theatrical families, which were then more numerous than they are now. In their homes these actors had imbibed a reverence for the stage and its traditions.

Some actors had other callings. For instance, "Pop Bailey," as he was called, who for many years played old men's parts at the Walnut Street Theater, kept a thread and needle store on one of the side streets; the "walking gentleman" of the company kept a drug-store in Baltimore, and J. B. Roberts, the stage manager, had a school of elocution. Salaries were small, and an outside occupation gave some little additional income which was often

sadly needed. The stage door-keeper, "Pop Reed," who was a grandfather, furnished children of all ages from his own family when they were needed to take part in plays. Roland Reed was of this family.

The leading members of the company of the Walnut Street Theater had their own wardrobes; the others dressed their parts from the wardrobe of the theater, consequently the old wardrobe woman and her daughter were constantly brushing and repairing the stock. The costuming of the plays was incongruous. Harmony of color was unknown and three or four characters might have been seen on the stage at one time all dressed in the same colors. Frequently costumes of different epochs were used in the same play.

The pride of the low comedian was his collection of wigs, the pride of the leading man was his collection of swords, and the property room was truly an "old curiosity shop." It contained every property that had been used in plays since the theater was built,—throne chairs, papier-maché gilded banquet set, Gothic furniture, and a thousand and one other things. All these properties were made by the property man, and were used season after season.

In the theater there was employed a scenic artist, whose principal occupation was paint-

ing in and then painting out old scenery, of which there was a goodly stock in the scene-room. Managers bought very little new material in those days. Then, too, there was the prompter, who often played small parts, and the call-boy, whose duty it was to go around to the dressing-rooms and call out: "Half Hour," "Quarter Hour," and "Overture! Everybody down to begin." He also called the members of the company from the green-room a few minutes before their cues to go on the stage.

The green-room in those days was indispensable to the theater. Its walls were usually adorned with old play-bills, portraits of actors, and engravings of scenes from plays. In a prominent place was the call-board, on which casts for plays, calls for rehearsals, and communications from the manager were posted; and there was also a large mirror in which everybody took a last look before going on the stage.

The gossip of the "green-room,"—all that was said and done within its sacred precincts,—were "secrets of the prison-house," and were kept from the knowledge of the public. The actors then believed that the less the public knew of them off the stage, the greater its interest would be in their stage work,—in other

words, they sought to preserve the illusion they created behind the footlights. In those days the papers did not devote space to the trivial sayings and doings of the people of the stage as they do now.

Nor were there any unions: the musical director and the members of the orchestra were engaged separately, not *en masse,* and so was the entire stage force. On Monday, the day when the "ghost walked,"—the term used when salaries were forthcoming,—every one employed in the theater received his or her salary in person.

The captain of the supers was an important and usually an arrogant individual,—so arrogant, indeed, that there were frequent fights on Saturday nights after the performance when in the supers' room he would try to keep out for himself a part of their wages. An absurd story is told of one of these worthies. This particular captain was given his first lines to speak in "Richard III," and he was heard at different times rehearsing the lines aloud, with varying intonations. At the performance, instead of saying as he lowered his halberd, menacing Richard III, "Stand back, my lord, and let the *coffin pass,*" he said, "Stand back, my lord, and let the *parson cough.*"

Edwin Forrest and Edwin Booth were al-

lowed thirty-two supers, equally divided, for the armies in "Richard III" and "Macbeth." The sixteen of each army came on the stage with their tin spears and stood in awkward attitudes while the characters were speaking the dialogue. The armies of Macbeth and of Macduff, or of Richard and of Richmond, were all in sight; the audience could count the men in them. However, to the less profitable stars the manager furnished only ten supers for their armies. The Walnut Street Theater was then typical of all the stock theaters in the country that played stars.

There is a distinction between the art of acting, which is the actor's art, and stage art, which is the art of the stage manager and producer. Even then there was some evidence of the better stage art to come. At Mrs. John Drew's Arch Street Theater in Philadelphia, at Wallack's Theater in New York, and at the Boston Museum excellent actors were employed and correct productions were given. These theaters did not play stars except on rare occasions. Edwin Booth at the Winter Garden Theater in New York, and later at Booth's Theater, was the first actor of my time to present plays that were absolutely correct in every detail.

The passing of the inclined stage made it

possible to "box" scenes, as we do now,—that is, to build a room with sides. At the time of which I am writing the Walnut Street Theater and a few others in the country had a considerable pitch in the stage from the back wall to the footlights, as had all theaters until about 1850.

In the Old Bowery and in the Chatham Street Theater in New York the pit was where the orchestra seats are now. The floor was level, with long benches without backs, and the incline in the stage enabled the persons that were in the pit to see the actors. The level pit floor was a feature of the theater that had come down to us from the days of Shakespeare's "groundlings." All our theaters now have level stages, and the pitch is in the orchestra floor, as well as in the balcony and gallery. When the "pittites" were banished aloft they were called "gallery gods." The incline in the stage doubtless gave rise to the stage directions "up stage" and "down stage," which are still in use.

During my first season at the Walnut Street Theater in the spring of the year, J. B. Roberts, our stage manager, organized a small company that was to support him the following summer on a tour of the neighboring towns. This company was composed principally of members of the Walnut Street Theater stock company.

Joe Barrett, the juvenile man, a brother of Lawrence Barrett, was engaged by Roberts as his leading support, and the juvenile and "walking gentleman" parts fell to me. Just before the time for rehearsal Joe Barrett went to New York, got on a prolonged spree, and threw up his engagement. In the emergency, the leading parts were given to me to play. They were nearly all familiar to me, as I had studied the lines and had often seen them played.

Mr. Roberts had coached his favorite pupil in all her leading rôles. She was an attractive lady in appearance; but she was a novice, and her acting was amateurish. Roberts himself was a tragedian, and though he was small of stature, he had a big voice. The repertoire consisted of six plays,—"Othello," "Richelieu," "The Robbers," "Richard III," "Hamlet," and "The Stranger,"—and he was thus enabled to change the bill nightly. As the company was small, parts had to be doubled. Therefore in "Hamlet" I played the Ghost, First Actor, and Laertes: in "Richard III," King Henry VI, Buckingham, and Richmond. Fisher, the old man of the company, doubled Polonius and the Grave Digger in "Hamlet." Indeed, everybody in the company doubled parts, more or less.

My wardrobe was limited to a few costumes that had been made by my dear old mother, while Roberts had a large personal wardrobe, parts of which he allowed the members of the company to use. He lent me his Othello armor to wear when I took the part of the Ghost in Hamlet.

This tour was typical of the "barn-storming" of those days.

We left Philadelphia, all in good spirits, with a little advance salary in our pockets, and set out for Roberts' native city, Wilmington, Delaware, where we were to play a week's engagement. There we were fairly successful and our salaries were paid Saturday night. Then we went over into Pennsylvania and played two or three nights in each town that we visited. But business went from bad to worse, our salaries were reduced, and later only hotel bills were paid. Two members of the company left, but the rest of us struggled on.

Our objective point was Reading, Pennsylvania, where we were to open a new house on the Fourth of July. In this venture we saw a prospect of our getting money enough to reach home. When we arrived in Reading July 1 the railroad company was holding our trunks for our railroad fares from the last town we had been in. Fortunately, there was sufficient ad-

vance sale to pay the rent of the theater and release our trunks. Roberts got out some printed announcements, stating that he had brought his company there a few days in advance, in order to give them a much needed rest before the opening performance. Schiller's romantic drama of "The Robbers" was to be the opening play and there was no one to play the part of Schufterle. The company needed two persons, as no one could double the part, and as all the possible doubles had already been made. The only alternative was to cut the part of Schufterle out of the play. Roberts, who was an ultra-legitimate, was loathe to do this; besides, it cut him out of one of the best scenes for his own acting.

The morning after our arrival a few of us were standing in front of our cheap hotel when a young fellow of the "Bowery boy" type approached us and asked:

"Are youse fellers wit der show?"

"Yes," we answered.

"D'you t'ink I cud git a job?"

Just then Roberts joined us and heard the question.

"Are you an actor?" he asked.

"I'm in d'show business—I wuz lef' here las' week by d'soicus."

"What was your occupation with the circus?"

"I gave out dodgers, an' rode in der street parade dressed up as one o' dem knights."

"Do you think you could study the lines of a part and play it?"

"Yer betcher life I cud! Do yer want ter hear me spout now?"

"Not now. Not here."

Then addressing us, Roberts said:

"This young man might be taught to play the part of Schufterle. . . . At any rate, we can try him. Mr. Pitou and Mr. Bradford, will you kindly go over the part with him? You have an hour before rehearsal begins."

Joe Bradford and I took the young man, whose name was Henry Clay Jones, to our room. He could scarcely read the part, but we managed to teach him the lines during the next few days. The night of the Fourth of July it was very warm, and the windows were all open; moreover, the house had not been completely finished and the plaster on the walls was still damp. But the theater was filled, and as it was the first full house we had had we were all happy when the curtain went up on "The Robbers."

Bradford, who shortly afterward left the

stage and became a reporter on one of the Boston papers, was a wit and a practical joker, and he had said to me that morning:

"I hope they puttied the window panes securely; if not, there'll be some broken glass tonight when Roberts lets his voice out in that hall."

In the scene where Charles de Moor, the hero of the play, and his band of robbers are resting in the woods, after having pillaged a village the night before, the members of the band tell of their individual exploits. Schufterle, a villainous character, rises to tell of his, and Henry Clay Jones was overcome with stage-fright. He had spoken his lines perfectly at rehearsals. In his speech he tells of how he found a woman standing in the doorway of her hut, with an infant in her arms, how he took the child from the mother, threw it into the flames, and then stabbed the mother to death. The lines suddenly left him, but he retained a general idea of the purport of the speech, and he began with:

"Az I waz comin' down de street I seen a woman wit a baby in her arms standin' at der doorway of a burnin' house. Well, fellers,—I jest snatched dat baby an' chucked it in der fire—then I kilt ther mother—"

During the speech Roberts had been standing up the stage in a pensive attitude. The

audience did not seem to notice anything extraordinary in Henry Clay Jones' delivery of Schufterle's speech. They probably thought it was in character. But it jarred on Roberts' esthetic tastes, and he turned and came down the stage. In a rage he shouted his line to Schufterle:

"Did you so?"

Jones entirely forgot his next line. Bradford couldn't resist the temptation to whisper to Jones: "I'm damned if I didn't." And Jones repeated as loud as he could:

"I'm damned if I didn't."

It is a well-known fact that when an actor forgets a line through stage-fright he will repeat the words the prompter gives him.

Roberts was nonplussed, but the audience evidently thought it was a line of the play.

The next day Roberts had money enough to take the company back to Philadelphia and to give to each member a few dollars. This ended my only experience of "barn-storming."

There was a young Hungarian gentleman in the Walnut Street Theater company whose stage name was Maurice Neville; his real name was Maurice Grossmann. He and I were about the same age, and we were friends and lodged together. He had a marked accent, which he practised hard to overcome. Indeed,

no young actor was ever a more indefatigable student; he was always either reading the works of English authors or studying aloud Shakespearean rôles. His ambition to attain greatness in his profession was prodigious and he possessed many attributes to win distinction. He had an engaging personality, a strong, expressive face, and an overabundance of intensity, which would have mellowed in time as he progressed in his art. Unfortunately, our language proved to be an insurmountable barrier to him. His father was one of the Hungarian patriots who visited this country with Kossuth. While here he had made the acquaintance of many distinguished men, among them Longfellow, Whittier, and Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes. Later, when Neville came to this country he brought with him letters of introduction from his father to these gentlemen and through them he met Edwin Booth, who engaged him for the Walnut Street Theater.

During our association Neville and I were frequently invited to the Sunday night reunions at the house of Grace Greenwood, who was a popular story writer of the day. Her contributions to the New York *Weekly Ledger,* owned by Robert Bonner, helped to swell his fortune, and largely increased the circulation

of the paper. There we met Mrs. Ames, the Boston sculptress, and Celia Thaxter, author of the book of poems entitled "The Isle of Shoals." These ladies were passing that winter with Grace Greenwood. In this charming circle we also met many other persons who were then famous in literature and the arts and the conversation was brilliant and instructive.

During our second season Neville was cast for the part of Geordie Robertson in "Jeanie Deans," a dramatization of Sir Walter Scott's "Heart of Midlothian." In the scene where Effie Deans is confined in the Toblooth, Geordie Robertson is passionately haranguing the crowd to invade the prison and rescue Effie, when it is announced that the Forty-first Regiment is approaching to disperse the mob. Geordie appeals to his hearers to resist and charge upon the soldiers, and his speech ends with the words, "On them, boys; here comes the Forty-first!" Carried away by the situation, and declaiming his lines with nervous force, poor Neville made a fatal *faux pas:* he cried out: "On them, boys; here come the Forty-onesters!"

In our room that night he sobbed and cried. He was mortified, discouraged, his noble spirit completely crushed. As we approached the stage entrance the next morning some boot-

blacks, who had evidently been in the gallery the night before, cried out to him, "Hello, Forty-onesters!" He resigned from the theater that very day. Later he appeared on the German stage in this country, playing "Othello" and other Shakespearean rôles in German, of which language he was master. Shortly afterward he returned to Europe, and won great distinction on the stage of Vienna. A younger brother of Neville, Ignatius R. Grossmann, came to this country later. He was a professor of languages in one of our New England Colleges, and he married Edwina, the only daughter of Edwin Booth.

No foreign artist who appeared in this country ever completely mastered our language, and but few of those who partly mastered it won enduring success. Janauschek was successful for a time, but her popularity waned and she retired to live secluded in Saratoga, where she died in poverty. Madame Rhea was popular for a few years only. Madame Modjeska, however, whose art was consummate, lasted longer in public favor; but she too, through lack of patronage, was compelled to retire to her ranch in California.

So far there has been one foreign artist playing in English parts who until the time of his death retained his hold on our public. That

was Charles Fechter, who was essentially a romantic and melodramatic actor. He possessed the finished art of the French stage, and he had the emotional temperament of the Latin races. The part of Hamlet be played in a long, blond wig and with a slight blond Van Dyck beard. He introduced much new stage business in "Hamlet," particularly in the last act, making the superb tragedy somewhat melodramatic. Taken all in all, he was at his best in his version of "Monte Cristo."

With the single exception of Sarah Bernhardt, the tours in this country of foreign artists who have appeared in plays in their own language have not been profitable to the managers who have brought them over. Tommaso Salvini, Rossi, Réjane, Duse, Ristori, Coquelin Aîné, Bogumil Dawison, Mounet-Sully, and Jane Hading may have personally made money under the exacting terms of their contracts, but their managers either lost or made nothing. The reputations of great foreign artists naturally create curiosity among our people to see and hear them. But they have a vogue with us for a short time only. Few of them revisit this country more than once.

There was a unique performance of "Othello" given at the old Winter Garden Theater, in which Bogumil Dawison, the great

Polish tragedian, appeared as Othello, speaking German; Edwin Booth played Iago in English; Madame Schiller, who was then Mr. Booth's leading lady, was Desdemona, and J. Newton Gothold played Cassio. Madame Schiller and Gothold in their scenes with Mr. Dawison spoke German, and in their scenes with Mr. Booth they spoke English. The novelty of this performance filled the theater, but the play thus interpreted lost its impressiveness, and was somewhat grotesque.

CHAPTER II

Coquelin Aîné and others have claimed that there is no such thing as genius in acting, that acting is art and art only.

But to me that there is such a thing as genius in acting has always been self-evident. Genius is inborn; art is acquired. Genius can be creative only after art is mastered, for by the aid of art alone can genius express itself effectively. The painter must learn to mix his colors and to paint; the sculptor must learn to mold his clay and to chisel his marble, and the actor must learn to act. The young actor afflicted with nervousness is so affected, both psychically and physically, that he is unable at the moment to grasp and interpret the full emotional value of his lines. Consequently he has nothing to impart to his hearers but words. No actor can convey to an audience the impressions made upon him by the lines he speaks and by the lines spoken by other characters in the play until he has become complete master of his faculties while he is on the stage. This self-control he acquires only after years of experience and

after a great deal of work in cultivating his art. The actor that in some great situation can rouse an audience to a pitch of emotional enthusiasm,—as did Edwin Booth when he threatened to "launch the curse of Rome" in "Richelieu,"—surely gives proof of genius.

Genius in acting is the expression of the higher human emotions, such as the depicting of our feelings when we are stirred by those events of life that are not commonplace occurrences, but happenings that plunge us into despair or lift us with hope. The great writers of plays weave these dramatic events into their stories. The actor must not only conceive the subtle meaning of the author's lines in building up the character he is to portray, but, if he is to be proclaimed a genius, he must possess that inborn quality that will enable him to make his hearers feel with him. True, the geniuses of the stage belong to their own generations only; others may learn only a little of them by reading of them in histories of the drama. Unlike the great of all other arts, the actor can leave nothing to posterity. This fact has been seized upon by some writers as a proof that genius does not belong to the stage. They argue that, as the actor has nothing to bequeath to future generations, he has no claim to the possession of genius. But when great expression is given

to any art by one whose work transcends that of others it is stamped as the work of genius. Then, why may there not be genius in acting, even if the actor's work is limited to his own generation? And what is this special genius of the actor?—what are its attributes, its requirements? The painter, the sculptor, the representative of any of the arts except the drama, may be tall or short, fat or thin, even unattractive in personality, and yet he may be proclaimed a genius. But more is required of the actor. He must possess not only the inborn gift of the actor but also the physical attributes necessary to make his genius felt. He must have a voice of some power, flexible and sympathetic; he must have an expressive eye and mobile features that will reflect unconsciously the emotions he feels. He must have temperament and imagination, and his must be a mind in which the critical faculty is not over assertive. The predominance of imagination enables the actor to deceive himself into the belief, for the time being, that he is the character he is portraying. His personality must be prepossessing; and while he need not necessarily be an Apollo, he cannot be physically unattractive.

Many actors have a nervous intensity that is sometimes mistaken for genius; it is a sort

of subconscious magnetism. Such actors undoubtedly feel varying emotions, but they fail to affect their audiences, for their power is a negative quality, self-effective but not transmittable,—simply the earnestness of the actor, something more physical than psychical. Lawrence Barrett, John McCullough, Edwin Adams, E. L. Davenport, J. W. Wallack, Mrs. D. P. Bowers, Janauschek, and others belonged to this class.

Lawrence Barrett was a student and a thinker. He was also a capable manager, as he proved when he arranged and conducted the largely profitable tours of Booth and Barrett. But no successful actor-manager was ever a genius. Barrett had a nervous, not an emotional, temperament. He was not creative. He was the leading man during the second season at Booth's theater, and he copied every bit of Edwin Booth's stage business and used it when he later played Hamlet, Richelieu, and Iago. Indeed, Barrett's greatest charms were his voice, his perfect articulation, and his intelligent reading.

John McCullough was a self-educated man. He started his stage career as a super at the Arch Street Theater, Philadelphia, where he was taught the lines of the first parts he played. He was a disciple of Edwin Forrest's and

LAWRENCE BARRETT

In "Francesca da Rimini"

Facing page 40

played nearly all his repertoire. McCullough had a fine physique for Roman parts, and wore the toga with imposing effect, while his voice was robust and of about the same quality as Forrest's.

E. L. Davenport had a large and varied repertoire. His Hamlet was a scholarly performance, and well interpreted, so far as the reading of the part was concerned. His personality, however, was unsuited for the "melancholy Dane." And the same criticism may be made of Edwin Forrest and others of his contemporaries that included Hamlet in their repertoires,—which they nearly all did. With the exception of Edwin Booth, they all lacked "the glass of fashion" and the "mold of form." Davenport was at his best as William, in the nautical play "Black-eyed Susan;" as Sir Edward Mortimer, in "The Iron Chest;" as Bill Sykes, in a dramatization of Dickens' "Oliver Twist," and as Sir Giles Overreach, in "A New Way to Pay Old Debts."

The Hamlet of J. W. Wallack was about on a par with that of Davenport. Wallack's performance of Macbeth was admired for its subtle depicting of Macbeth's remorse and his horror at the appearance of the ghost of Banquo. He made it plain that in the murdering of his guest, King Duncan, he was but the

instrument of Lady Macbeth's ambition. His Macbeth, like that of Booth and Irving, was notable principally because of its mentality. It reflected the workings of a mind influenced by the civilization of the Elizabethan epoch rather than that of a mind of the feudal ages. Like Booth and Irving, Wallack did not suggest the semi-barbarism of the feudal warrior. In this character, Edwin Forrest made the conflict between the physical and the metaphysical Macbeth more apparent and effective. Wallack drew his largest audiences when he appeared as the leading character in "The Man With the Iron Mask"; as King James V. of Scotland, in "The King of the Commons," and as Fagin, in "Oliver Twist."

I once played Toby Crackit in a remarkable cast of "Oliver Twist" at the Walnut Street Theater. E. L. Davenport was the Bill Sykes, Lucile Western the Nancy Sykes, and J. W. Wallack the Fagin. This combination drew crowded houses for a week.

Lucile Western was a genius without education, and she possessed but little of the art of acting. This made it impossible for her to satisfy intelligent and critical audiences, but she was one of the most popular actresses of her time with the masses; and she swayed them by her undoubted genius. Physically she was al-

most masculine. She could stand the strain of repeated performances without an apparent let-up of emotional intensity. But her acting was not refined. As Lady Isabel in "East Lynne," a dramatization of a novel largely read at that time, she was the woman, not the highborn lady. Almost every emotional star and leading stock actresses in those days played Lady Isabel in "East Lynne," which was popular at the time, and was said to draw more money than any other play except "Uncle Tom's Cabin." In pathetic scenes Lucile Western's eyes would fill with tears and her audience would weep with her; she could feel emotions and convey them to the masses notwithstanding that her art was crude. The parts that best fitted her personality were Miami, the Indian Girl, in "Green Bushes," and Nancy Sykes in "Oliver Twist." As Nancy Sykes she gave a most vivid stage picture of a fallen woman clinging, through her affections, to a man that brutally beat her. Hers was a nature easily imposed upon; she could affect others by her acting and she herself was easily affected in real life, consequently she was the victim of many bogus appeals for charity, and she probably gave away more than half of her earnings.

Edwin Adams was of a volatile and jovial

disposition, much given to boyish pranks and innocent jestings. His present to Maggie Mitchell and her husband, Henry Paddock, on the occasion of their wooden wedding was a cord of wood, a saw, and a buck. He did not take things seriously either on or off the stage. Because of his fine disposition he had a greater number of friends and acquaintances throughout the country than any actor of his day, and his memory for faces and names was marvelous. He would alight from a train at some city in which he was to play that week, and greet a group of people who had come to the station to meet him each by name as he shook hands with them, though he may not have met one of them for a year. This peculiar trait no doubt added much to his popularity. He was convivial and liked the company of convivial spirits, and he was much sought after and entertained. He loved life at its highest tension, and he had but little time for study and serious thought. He, too, played Hamlet, and other serious rôles, but he was essentially a light comedian. With his nature, he could not have been anything else. His Rover, a strolling actor, in "Wild Oats," and his Charles Surface in "The School for Scandal" were among his best parts. He played Mercutio in "Romeo and Juliet" on the opening night and during the run of the play at

Booth's Theater, and the press and public justly pronounced his the best performance of the part that had ever been given. Life meant a great deal to Edwin Adams, but, like his favorite character, the mercurial Mercutio, he died too young.

CHAPTER III

Edwin Forrest belonged to the robust school of tragedians that had preceded him. David Garrick, Edmond Keane, and Junius Brutus Booth were of this school, and from the traditions of the green-room and the accounts that I have read of these actors I am impressed with the belief that they possessed genius. I have spoken with actors, long since dead, who had played with some of them, and who described them as having had great intensity, temperament, and the power to express emotions and thrill their hearers. Their audiences must have demanded vigorous acting, for these actors were declamatory and strident. And, great geniuses as they were, they were seldom absolutely correct in the costuming of their rôles, as may be seen from engravings of them. Edwin Forrest had a clientele of cultured persons, for he was a scholarly actor, and his intelligent work commanded their respect; his great following, however, was among the masses, and he was their idol as Jack Cade, Metamora, and Damon, in "Damon and Pythias." So great was his popularity in

Philadelphia, where he made his home, that he usually played two engagements each season at the Walnut Street Theater.

When Mr. Forrest came to play his spring engagement,—during my first season,—he refused to include Richelieu in his repertoire unless some young man was cast for the part of François. The part had always been played by the soubrette whose line of business included all boy parts. François is a young acolyte in the household of Richelieu, and, though his is a small part, it is an important one. Forrest realized the absurdity of a woman's playing such a part. Barton Hill, who was then traveling with Mr. Forrest as his leading support, and who usually directed rehearsals, selected me for François. There were only two rehearsals of the play, neither of which Mr. Forrest attended. Up to that time it was the most important part that had been entrusted to me, and when the night of the performance arrived I was what actors term "dead letter perfect." Mr. Forrest was exacting, and the knowledge of this made me nervous.

During the action of the play François, who has been sent on a secret mission by Richelieu, returns and announces his failure. When I spoke the line, "This purse of gold," Mr. Forrest as Richelieu exclaimed, "Gold is no

proof." On the impulse of the moment, I threw away the purse, in the direction of the footlights. After my exit I stood in the wings watching the balance of the scene. Later on, de Mauprat confessed to Richelieu that he was the leader of a conspiracy against the Cardinal's life, and the conspirators were heard approaching, crying out, "Death to the Cardinal!"

Richelieu said that he would baffle them, and he went out with de Mauprat and his ward Julie, closing the center doors after him. The conspirators came on; de Mauprat threw open the doors, showing Richelieu lying on his bed, and pointed to Richelieu, saying, "Strangled in his sleep, so runs the tale." He urged them to hasten back to Paris with the news that Richelieu was in heaven; and the conspirators rushed off, crying, "I shall be rich—I shall be noble." Then Richelieu joined de Mauprat, standing in the open door, laughing in triumph at having outwitted the conspirators.

The purse, one of those old-fashioned knitted property purses, liberally stuffed in each end with bits of tin and glass to make a jingling sound,—had entirely slipped my mind, and nobody had noticed it. At that time painted flats,—canvas stretched on frames running in grooves,—were used to close in the

scenes. The prompter blew his whistle, the stage hands shoved the flats, and the sheave of the one on the left side of the stage encountered the purse and refused to go any farther. Richelieu and de Mauprat remained standing in tableau. The flat was pulled back and tried again; this time the obstacle was discovered, and one of the carpenters, in his shirt sleeves and in full view of the audience, raised the end of the flat and removed the purse. The audience was shouting and laughing, and Mr. Forrest, swearing loud enough to be heard, left the stage. Of course the scene had been ruined. What would be the consequences? As soon as the act was over the members of the company assembled in the green-room and were discussing my mishap and sympathizing with me when Mr. Forrest's dresser appeared in the doorway and asked:

"Is Mr. Pitou here?"

"Yes," I answered.

"Mr. Forrest wants to see you in his dressing-room."

As I left the green-room the old lady of the company said, loud enough for me to hear:

"Poor young man!"

As an outcome of my fear and anxiety, I was almost defiant when I knocked at the door of Mr. Forrest's dressing-room.

"Come in!" was the firm reply to my rap.

I entered.

Mr. Forrest looked at me sharply for a moment and then asked:

"Who told you to throw that purse on the stage?"

"Nobody. You said gold was no proof, so I threw it away."

"Good! Only next time throw it up the stage."

"Yes, sir."

"You may go now."

"Thank you, sir."

I left the dressing-room of this "tyrant of the stage," as he was called by actors, knowing that he was a just and humane man.

At rehearsal once an actor was speaking an important speech when Mr. Forrest interrupted him with:

"*No, no;* that's *not the way* to read the speech! Read it like *this!*" and Mr. Forrest read the lines.

When he had finished the actor said:

"If I could read it like that, Mr. Forrest, I wouldn't be playing utility business for twelve dollars a week."

"Is that all you get?" inquired Mr. Forrest.

"Yes, sir."

EDWIN FORREST

As Damon

Facing page 51

"Well, then, you can read it as you damn please!"

The same season, after I had played Francois, the part of Marcellus in "Damon and Pythias" was assigned to me. Mr. Forrest supplied a sort of leather harness for Marcellus to wear under his Roman shirt,—an affair with two straps to buckle around the body, and a handle like that of a shawl strap for him to grasp when he threw Marcellus across the stage. When, as Marcellus, I fell upon my knees and announced to Damon that I had slain his horse so that he could not go to ransom Pythias with his own life, Forrest inserted his hand down the back of my Roman shirt and seized hold of the loop. I saw my opportunity; and as he threw me off, being lithe and supple I gave a spring and landed ten feet across the stage, all in a heap. Forrest was surprised and he looked around to see what had become of me. The applause that greeted this exhibition was tremendous, and he was apparently delighted, for he was very proud of his physical strength and liked to show his muscular legs and arms in Roman costume. After the curtain was down he sent for me, apologized for being so energetic, and asked me if I were hurt. I answered that I was all right, and

only hoped that next time he would throw me a few feet farther.

At another time the part of a young Indian runner in "Metamora" was given to me to play. The story is as follows: Metamora receives word that his tribe is shortly to be attacked by the white troops; he sends his wife and child for safety, in charge of the young Indian runner to a neighboring friendly tribe; his wife and child are captured by the whites, and the young Indian fights his way through them and returns to Metamora wounded, but with news of the capture. The property men and stage hands at that time were fond of playing jokes on young actors, and the property man gave me a knife about three feet long that looked like a machette.

"Isn't this too long?" I asked.

"No," he answered; "that's the knife always used for that part."

When Mr. Forrest saw me rush in upon the scene and strike an attitude, holding the bloody knife in front of me, he looked surprised and puzzled. During my speech his eyes wandered from the handle of that knife to its point, and then from the top of my head to my feet, as if he were comparing our respective lengths. When the scene was over he asked:

"Where did you get that knife?"

"From the property man," I quickly replied.

"He played a mean trick on you. He ought to be well thrashed."

"I'll thrash him," I said; and I did.

After the Marcellus episode Mr. Forrest always greeted me pleasantly when we met in the theater, and sometimes he spoke a few words of encouragement to me. Toward the end of his engagement he invited me to call on him. At the time he was living in an imposing mansion on Broad Street. On my way to visit him for the first time I stopped at a second-hand book stall and bought Dugald Stewart's "Philosophy of the Human Mind." Mr. Forrest was standing at the window of his house and saw me approaching, and in a few moments, after I had left my hat and coat and the book with the butler, he joined me in the library and gave me his hand in greeting. The first thing he said was:

"I saw a book under your arm; what was it?"

I told him.

"A very good book," he said; "I've read it."

Then he picked up a book from the table and said:

"Have you ever read this book?"

"What book is it?" I asked.

"The Bible," he replied, looking straight at me.

"I have read parts of it."

"You should read it through and carefully study it, not because it is claimed to have been divinely inspired, but for its philosophy. From it Shakespeare and other great writers took inspiration and suggestions for their philosophical teachings."

These were Mr. Forrest's exact words. I wrote them down that very day.

He showed me his books and his collection of paintings; then he took me into his gymnasium, and told me that he passed an hour there each day exercising. To show me how strong he was he took up a fifty-pound dumbbell and raised it above his head, and as he put it on the floor he laughingly said:

"Now you understand how I came to throw you so far up the stage that night."

I was amused; but I said nothing.

Edwin Forrest came the following fall to play an engagement at the theater; then some years passed before we met again.

My second season at the Walnut Street Theater was during Edwin Booth's engagement, when François and a number of youthful parts in his repertoire were allotted to me. At that time the Booth's Theater was being built in

New York, and Mr. Booth engaged me for his company at a salary of thirty dollars a week, just double what it was then.

CHAPTER IV

Booth's Theater was situated on the southeast corner of Sixth Avenue and Twenty-third Street in New York City. It was built by Mr. Booth with the assistance of a very dear friend of his, and was the most complete theater in every respect that, up to that time, had been erected in this country. It cost over one hundred thousand dollars more than the original estimate.

The carpenter shops for the building of scenery, and the property shop for the making of properties, were under the sidewalk on the Twenty-third Street side. In the building was a large costume department where all the costumes were made, and this department was under the supervision of a Mr. Joyce, a scholarly man, whose researches had made him an authority. There was also a small housekeeping apartment where Mr. Booth lived; and on the top floor there were a gymnasium for the use of the members of the company and a room where fencing was taught by a *maître des armes* to about a hundred young men who took part in "Romeo and Juliet."

Under the stage an excavation fifty feet deep had been made through solid rock, and this excavation had added largely to the cost of the theater. The purpose of it was that scenes might be lowered out of sight and raised by hydraulic power through narrow openings running across the stage. This innovation was the beginning of the end of the old flats that ran in grooves.

The most competent men of that day were at the head of every department of Booth's Theater; the best scenic artists were on the paint frames; the company was large, it drew high salaries, and the expenses were enormous.

Mr. Booth had selected "Romeo and Juliet" as the opening play for his new theater for two reasons: because he had expected to appear in it at the matinée the day of the Winter Garden Theater fire, and because he wished to introduce Mary McVickar, his wife, to the New York public as Juliet. Once while Mr. Booth was playing an engagement at McVickar's Theater in Chicago the leading lady of the company was taken suddenly ill, and there was no one in the company to play Juliet in "Romeo and Juliet" that night. To the surprise of everybody, the daughter of the manager of the theater,—Mary McVickar, a young girl who had just been graduated from school,

—offered to play the part, saying she knew every line of it and every bit of stage business. She was given the opportunity, and she acquitted herself with credit, proving that she possessed dramatic talent of a high order. Later she played other parts with Mr. Booth during that engagement; his courtship of her followed, and they were shortly afterward married. She was his second wife, his first having been Mary Devlin, the mother of his daughter Edwina. Mary McVickar died a few years after she married Mr. Booth, and he remained a widower until his death.

Below is a programme of the opening night in Booth's Theater. Very few of that cast, besides myself, are living to-day. Indeed, I know positively that all but three are dead, and I am not sure that those three are still living.

CAST OF ROMEO AND JULIET

Opening Night, Booth's Theater, February 3, 1869

Escalus, Prince of Verona.....Mr. A. Pitou
Paris, a Young Nobleman, Kinsman to the Prince.....
Mr. Fred. Monroe
Montague, } Heads of two houses, at variance with each other .....Mr. Thomas J. Hind
Capulet, } .....Mr. A. W. Fenno
An Old Man of the Capulet Family....Mr. W. C. Drummond
Romeo, Son to Montague,.....Mr. Edwin Booth

Mercutio, Kinsman to the Prince, and friend to Romeo,....
Mr. Edwin Adams
Benvolio, Nephew to Montague, and friend to Romeo,....
Mr. Charles Norris
Tybalt, Nephew to Lady Capulet,.....Mr. Harry Langdon
Friar Lawrence, A Franciscan,.....Mr. Mark Smith
Friar John, of the same order,.....Mr. J. P. Deuel
Balthazar, Servant to Romeo,.....Mr. G. A. Vinton
Peter, } .....Mr. Charles Peters
Sampson, } Servants to Capulet, ...Mr. John Chatterson
Gregory, } .....Mr. Nelson Decker
Abraham, Servant to Montague,.....Mr. Henry Hogan
An Apothecary .....Mr. Hector Mackey
First Musician .....Mr. Augustus Waters
Second Musician .....Mr. W. H. V. Wintle
Third Musician .....Mr. C. J. Dade
Lady Capulet, Wife to Capulet,.....Miss E. V. Proudfoot
Juliet, Daughter to Capulet,.....Miss Mary McVickar
Nurse to Juliet .....Miss Fanny Morant
Kinsfolk of both Houses; Maskers, Guards, Watchmen and Attendants.

This theater was the realization of Edwin Booth's ambition,—a "Temple of Art," to be devoted to the presentation of Shakespeare's plays and the plays of other great dramatists. But unfortunately he could not carry out his plans. Then, as now, a theater thus restricted could not be pecuniarily successful, as has been lately again proved by the fate of the New Theater in New York, which was built by a number of wealthy gentlemen who had mistaken ideas of theatrical conditions and the requirements of the public.

Edwin Booth was justly proud of having his own theater in which he could produce lavishly under his own supervision the plays of his repertoire. The triumph of that opening night, the laudatory comments of the press, the eulogies of admirers and friends because of his praiseworthy effort to elevate his art, doubtless compensated him at the time, but the result of his effort was his bankruptcy.

The seats and boxes for the opening had all been sold by auction, and when the curtain went up the theater was filled with one of the most distinguished audiences ever assembled on such an occasion, for people had come from distant cities to be present.

Before this time the stage version of Garrick's had been played, but on this occasion the text of Shakespeare was followed closely. In the first act the entire great stage represented a square in Verona, and when the servants of the houses of Montague and Capulet started a quarrel that was eventually participated in by the retainers and heads of both factions, over one hundred combatants, with drawn swords, engaged in the mêlée. The sound of trumpets was heard in the distance, and the Prince of Verona entered, preceded by his guards and a number of lords. It was an imposing entrance, at a dramatic moment.

Part of the audience, mistaking me for Edwin Booth, started to give me his reception, and I broke into the applause with my first lines ending with:

> "Throw your mistempered weapons to the ground
> And hear the sentences of your moved prince."

The fighting on the stage ceased, in the audience there was a wave of half-suppressed laughter and a rustling of programmes, and Mr. Booth, standing in the wings, motioned to me and said, "Wait." As I fully realized the situation, it was an ordeal for me. However, in a few seconds, that seemed as many minutes, the audience quieted, but when I made my exit there was again applause. Some of the newspapers the next day commented upon the event, and it was often remarked that there was a resemblance between Mr. Booth and me. Our hair and eyes were of the same color, but he was ten years older than I was and over an inch taller. And I had a slight black moustache, while he was always clean-shaven.

During the run of "Romeo and Juliet" Mr. Booth was greatly annoyed by a woman who went to the different stores and bought goods on credit, representing herself to be his wife. Of course when Mr. Booth received the bills he discovered the fraud. And when the woman

was confronted by a detective she brazenly asserted that Edwin Booth had married her years before in San Francisco, and that he was the father of her child. The detective had been instructed to proceed cautiously in the matter in order to avoid publicity, so he had the woman shadowed and then he reported his interview with her. She had defied him to arrest her.

Mr. Booth then consulted his lawyer and a friend, Judge Dowling, a well-known character and criminal judge during the Tweed régime.

One evening shortly afterward he said to me:

"I want you to do me a favor."

"With pleasure; what is it?" I replied.

"It involves a personal sacrifice on your part," he said, smiling.

"What sacrifice?"

"The shaving off of your moustache. Will you do it?"

"Certainly."

He then told me the story of the mysterious woman and that Judge Dowling had hit upon a plan to unmask her. The plan was to confront the woman with me and have her mistake me for Edwin Booth.

The next day the woman was quietly arrested on some trivial charge, taken before Judge

Dowling, and sent to Blackwell's Island for ten days. The following morning at ten o'clock, minus my moustache, I met Mr. Booth, his lawyer, and Judge Dowling at the theater. We all got into a carriage and were driven to a pier on the East River, from which we took the Department boat to Blackwell's Island. On our arrival we were met by the warden, who escorted us to his office. Mr. Booth always wore a black derby hat, and, in the winter, a paletot. Judge Dowling said, "Edwin, let Mr. Pitou put on your hat and paletot." After this was done he looked at me for a moment and said: "It's all right; our plan will succeed. . . . Now, warden, take this young man over to the workhouse. You understand everything; so does he. We'll wait here."

We entered a large room where three or four dozen women, in charge of a matron, were sewing. The women all looked up at us, and one, throwing her work aside, rushed toward me, crying: "Oh, Edwin! My husband! I knew you would come to me." Before the warden could interfere, she threw her arms around my neck. He pushed her away, and we quickly left the room. When we reached the office he explained to the others what had happened, and Judge Dowling instructed him to fetch the woman. Then he told Mr. Booth to go into the

next room and remain there until he called him.

When the warden returned with the woman she was surprised at seeing Judge Dowling. She seemed puzzled for a moment, and then she fixed her eyes on me. Judge Dowling said to her, pointing to me:

"You claim that this gentleman, Mr. Booth, is your husband?"

She answered: "Yes; he knows he is, and the father of my child. You can't deny it, Edwin."

Judge Dowling called into the other room, "Come here!" and Mr. Booth entered. The woman was startled. Half dazed she looked at Mr. Booth and then at me.

Judge Dowling said sharply: "Which of these men is Edwin Booth, and which is your husband? They can't both be."

She threw up her arms and cried: "My God! I'm trapped!"

Then she became hysterical and begged for mercy. She confessed that she had never seen Edwin Booth except on the stage and on the street years before in San Francisco and lately in New York. Knowing that he was married, and believing that he would pay her hush money, she had planned the blackmail.

Judge Dowling told the warden to take her

away, and after they had left the room he said:

"She'll get a few years for this."

"No; I don't want that," said Mr. Booth.

"What do you want?" asked the Judge.

"Get her confession in writing, give her some money, and send her back to San Francisco."

"What! After all the annoyance she has caused you?"

"Yes; it's all over now. I considered my wife in this matter, not myself," replied Mr. Booth.

We had lunch with the warden, and afterward we returned to the city.

That woman was fortunate in having a man of Edwin Booth's gentle nature to pass judgment on her, and the reporters of the day did not get hold of the story for a sensational write-up.

Lately a Shakespearean actor of some prominence, associating the name of Edwin Booth with that of Edwin Forrest and Lawrence Barrett, made assertions in print that were misleading. His statements were endorsed,—innocently, I would believe,—in a New York paper by a gentleman whose views on things theatrical are usually correct. I doubt if these gentlemen ever saw Edwin Booth on the

stage when he was in possession of his full powers. If they did, it was at a time when their judgment was immature, and therefore they are incapable of reaching a conclusion worthy of public utterance.

Mr. Booth's art was the best of the actor's art that is now prevalent. His school was the natural school of to-day, for it was he who introduced it; he was neither "declamatory" nor "strident." At the dress rehearsal of "Romeo and Juliet" he said to me, "Don't stride so; walk naturally." In his advice to the players, in his scene with the grave digger in "Hamlet" and in numerous quiet scenes of other plays, his delivery was conversational, but always earnest. And E. H. Sothern, who is of to-day, treats these scenes in "Hamlet" in the same way.

When Edwin Booth played a joint engagement with Henry Irving in London the press and public of that city did not pronounce his art "archaic." Indeed, his school of acting and Mr. Irving's were identical, but Mr. Irving had mannerisms and Mr. Booth had none. These mannerisms of Mr. Irving's were constitutional, and they had nothing to do with his art, nor with his school of acting.

Edwin Booth's genius when he was at his best would as surely thrill a Broadway audi-

ence to-day as it did in the past. He would not be "hooted from the stage," nor would he be considered an "archaic curiosity."

What our present-day Shakespearean actors lack is not Edwin Booth's art, but his genius. Shakespeare was never so widely read and taught as now; in all our schools and colleges he is foremost in classes of English literature, and if he is less popular on the stage it is the fault of his interpreters. His students evidently find him more impressive in the classroom and in the library.

Edwin Booth's temperament was emotional; his tastes were artistic. He associated with scholarly and esthetic people, and he numbered among his friends and admirers the most eminent men of his time, but his audiences were composed of all classes, from the cultured to the unlettered "gods of the gallery," and his genius affected them all. His impulses in real life were the same as those of all men of genius who pursue art. His feelings were easily appealed to, and he was always generous with his brother actors, for whom he professed friendship.

The seasons that Edwin Adams and Lawrence Barrett were his leading support, he gave each of them an opportunity to appear as stars at Booth's Theater,—Edwin Adams,

in "Narcisse" and "Enoch Arden," and Lawrence Barrett, in "The Man o' Airlie." His generosity, however, helped to swell his losses. He had no capacity for business, figures and accounts being as distasteful to him as they are to all geniuses. His business interests were looked after by J. Henry Magonigle, manager of the theater, who frequently warned him against his extravagance in the production of plays. But expense meant nothing to Mr. Booth; recognition of his artistic achievements was all that he desired.

Booth passed a great deal of his time on the stage, on the paint frames, in the costume department, and in the carpenter shop and the property room. He was constantly consulting with the heads of these different departments, and he often lingered for hours on the paint frame, smoking his pipe and chatting with his favorite scenic artist, Charles Witham, of whom he said in my hearing, "A better scenic artist never put brush to canvas." He loved to watch one of his great productions grow from day to day until its completion realized his concept.

He had a small coterie of intimates in whose company he found pleasure and mental relaxation, but he had no social ambitions, and he avoided the attentions that fashionable soci-

ety was at different times eager to have him accept. In fact his life was his theater and there he virtually lived. This confinement doubtless contributed to his physical breakdown, which was followed by his too early death,—much too early, for he was unquestionably the greatest actor of his age.

I have reason to cherish and revere his memory, for he was interested in the outcome of my professional career, and he gave me his valuable advice at a time when it was necessary for me to decide what my future should be. I am glad now to have the opportunity to defend his fame against those who would belittle it. He honored me with his friendship while he lived, and he was my ideal as an actor. During my two seasons at his theater, I watched and studied him while he was acting, and unconsciously, as is too often the case with young persons, I grew to imitate him in voice and gesture. When the realization that I was doing this dawned upon me I sought an engagement elsewhere, and these were my last performances with Mr. Booth. Some years later I wrote to him for his advice, and two years after having written my first letter I had occasion to write to him again. During the interval between my letters, I met him only a few times, and then casually.

Tony Brandt
June 4th
1871

My dear Tilton –

Having a sincere regard for you I do not hesitate to give what you so frankly ask – my candid opinion as to advancement and future prospects as an actor. Your progress has been rapid, but I fear there is for you but very little beyond the point you have reached. You have failed to aid yourself of certain peculiarities which mark the novice, and which – I fear – are constitutional – never to be shaken off. Your voice lacks compass and power, and while your face interests, it lacks the mobility requisite for the delineation of varied passions.

I hardly think you will ever attain a position that will satisfy you — for I know your ambition to be worthy, and deserving of a higher reward than Mediocrity, I fear, will ever grant you.

You have asked my advice in a frank and manly way — I give what I truly feel to be the Truth; an opinion based on a closer and a more serious view for you than perhaps you were prompt of — for I have watched you with interest, delight and pained by turns, during your course; afraid to offer you by practical illustration — lest you confuse my unassuming, a habit of imitation.

Believe me,

my friend, I would not speak (or write this, rather) did I not feel a serious interest in you. It's a very delicate thing to handle - this self-esteem, and I would rather a thousand times be hurt than hurt another, but you, I am sure, will excuse what you have sought with the same feelings of kindness that have induced me to give it.

With my best wishes for your future welfare, believe me

ever y. friend

Edwin Booth

Below I give the letters that he wrote in answer to mine,—letters that are now published for the first time. In one is shown his kindly interest in young actors; in the other he reveals his innermost thoughts and desires. As some persons may find it difficult to read his writing, I have thought best to have the contents of his letters printed, in addition to presenting the originals.

"LONG BRANCH, June 4th, 1871.

"MY DEAR PITOU:

"Having a sincere regard for you, I do not hesitate to give what you so frankly ask,—my candid opinion as to your advancement and future prospects as an actor. Your progress has been rapid, but I fear there is for you very little beyond the point you have reached. You have failed to rid yourself of certain peculiarities which mark the novice, and which, I fear, are constitutional, never to be shaken off. Your voice lacks compass and power, and, while your face interests, it lacks the mobility requisite for the delineation of varied passions. I hardly think you will ever attain a position that will satisfy you, for I know your ambition to be worthy, and deserving of a higher reward than Melpomene, I fear, will ever grant you. You have asked my advice in a frank and manly way, and I give what I truly feel to be the truth, an opinion based on a closer and more zealous care for you than perhaps you ever dreamed of. For I have watched you with interest, during your career, delighted and grieved, at times, but afraid to assist you by practical illustration, lest you should acquire, unconsciously, a habit of imitation. Believe me, my friend, I could not speak (or write this, rather) did I not feel a sincere interest in you. It's a very delicate thing to handle,—this self-esteem,—and I would rather a thousand times be hurt than hurt another. But you, I am sure, will receive what

you have sought with the same feelings of kindness that have induced me to give it.

With my best wishes for your future welfare, believe me,

"Ever your friend,

"EDWIN BOOTH."

[Mr. Booth having written the letter that follows in purple ink, now greatly faded, it could not be reproduced by photographic process.—THE PUBLISHERS.]

"CHICAGO, March 9th, 1873.

"AUG. PITOU, ESQ.,

"DEAR SIR: In giving you the opinion you solicited, I did not mean to convey so false an impression as it appears I did. I did not think you would attain eminence, and that alone can render the actor's life endurable. I thought there would be, possibly, a better field for you elsewhere, one, perhaps, less fascinating, yet freer from the rocks of disappointment that so many 'young ambitions' split upon. I am glad, however, that you were prevented from following my advice. All successful men, I fancy, are to a certain extent fatalists, and I, for one, believe much in Destiny.

I had no desire to become an actor, my father opposed it, and yet, you see—! Successful as I have been, hard as I have labored, and notwithstanding the vast amount of money that I have squandered in the cause of art—I would cheerfully retire to the "calm comforts of a happy home" if Fate would let me. But I am a galley slave, chained to the oar and must row on forever, something always prevents my getting free. This may seem like affectation, but it is solid truth. 'Twas in this spirit that I wrote you, and, with this feeling, I advise all who ask my aid in this direction. However, there is, perhaps, no employment that pays better, and assuredly there is none more honorable if rightly followed. I am glad of your success and will be always pleased to hear of your advancement. Mr. McVickar received your letter, but his company is more than full already, having several that he cannot use. You know I have not seen you since he saw you at my place and consequently I can tell him no more than what he

knows already regarding your professional ability. I presume Magonigle has filled my list for next season—as I leave all such matters to him, and I gave him my views before I quitted home. Will you be kind enough to say to Mr. Stevens that I received his letter and regret my inability to visit him this season? I injured my forefinger last night in the combat with Macduff or I would write him. By telling him this and thus saving me the inconvenience of scrawling with three digits, you will greatly oblige

"Yours very truly,
"EDWIN BOOTH."

Versatility on the stage may indicate that an actor is an artist, but never that he is a genius, for he cannot be great both as a tragedian and as a comedian. He may, from cultivation of his art, be capable as both, but if he be acceptable as both he will never be potent in either. As Hamlet, Richelieu, Shylock, Iago, Richard III, and in "The Fool's Revenge" Edwin Booth gave evidence of his genius, while in the other rôles of his repertoire he was only the artist. His Petruchio in "The Taming of the Shrew" and his Benedick in "Much Ado about Nothing" were not effective, for he was not a comedian. When he alternated Othello and Iago with Lawrence Barrett, the nights he played Iago the theater was filled to its capacity, but when he appeared as Othello the theater was never full.

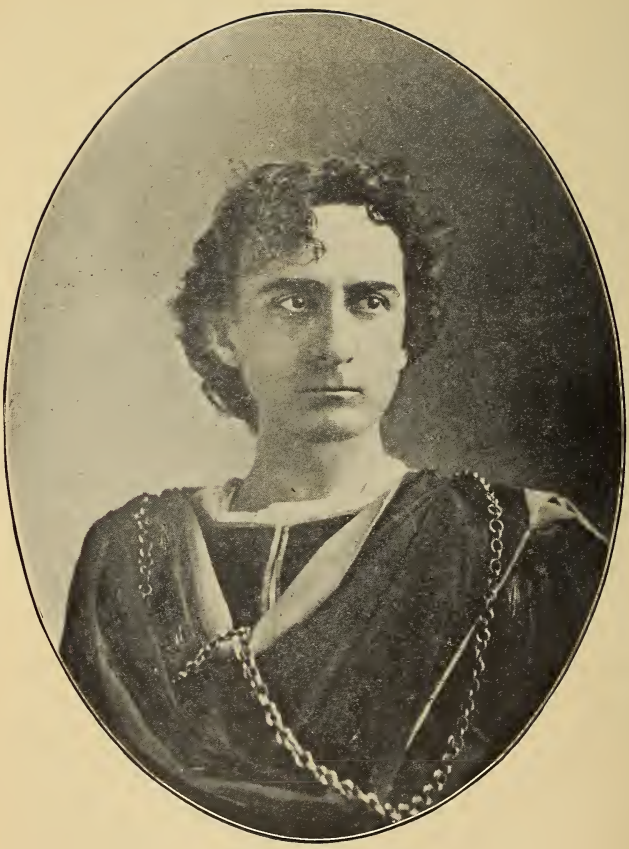
During the long run of "Hamlet" I played Horatio. Mr. Booth desired that, as Horatio,

I should look a trifle older than he did as Hamlet, so I made up with a reddish blond wig and a slight beard, which made me appear the elder, and the contrast when we were together on the stage was effective. Mr. Booth in his performance endeavored in many ways to convey to his audience Hamlet's affection for Horatio, and frequently during the play he would put his arm caressingly around my shoulders. In the churchyard scene when the funeral procession entered bearing the body of Ophelia Hamlet retires with Horatio to the shade of some trees, to watch unseen. There is quite an interval before Hamlet again speaks. One night during the obsequies Mr. Booth, leaning on my shoulders, whispered to me:

"Do you know that gentleman sitting with the two young ladies in my box?"

I answered, "No."

"Well, he's Mr. John A. Robinson, of Boston, my best friend and my partner. While I was playing at the Winter Garden Theater a number of men of wealth and position in this city said to me at different times, 'Why don't you build a theater of your own farther up town?' My answer was that I hoped to some day, but that I hadn't capital enough for that yet. One gentleman said, mentioning the names of several others who had spoken to me



EDWIN BOOTH

As Hamlet

Facing page 77

on the subject, 'Oh, we'll furnish the money.' After the Winter Garden Theater burned down I went to some of these gentlemen. They buttoned up their pockets. I was disappointed, and I felt badly about it. I had believed they were sincere in their offers, and I wanted a theater of my own in New York. One day shortly afterward I met that prince of good fellows there in my box. He said: 'What's the matter, Ned? You look dejected?' I told him what I have just told you. 'How much do you need?' he asked. 'Oh, at least two hundred thousand dollars,' I replied. 'All right, I'll let you have it,' he said. 'You!' I exclaimed. I was surprised, for I didn't know he was a man of great wealth. 'We'll look around and secure a site at once,' he said. Shortly afterward this property was bought—''

Just then I heard Hamlet's cue, ''A ministering angel shall my sister be when thou liest howling,'' spoken by Laertes.

''That's your cue,'' I said to Mr. Booth, who was looking intently at the box.

''What is it?'' he whispered.

''The fair Ophelia,'' I answered.

Almost instantly he was again Hamlet. He left my side, which he had never done before, and moved toward the center of the stage facing the grave, with his back to the audience.

When he turned an expression of mingled grief and horror was visible on his face, and he spoke the line, "The fair Ophelia," with greater feeling than I had ever before heard him give to it; then clasping his head between his hands he staggered to me and threw himself upon my breast. This instant dropping of one's individuality and investing oneself with the character being portrayed is another quality closely allied with the actor's genius. I have seen Edwin Booth, Mary Anderson, and Adelaide Neilson when talking and laughing with other persons in the wings instantly take up their cues and walk upon the stage, leaving their individuality behind them like a cast-off garment.

Mr. Booth spoke the soliloquies of Hamlet seated in a chair, not far removed from the footlights, in order that the varying expressions of his wonderful face might be better seen. While he was not slow in his delivery, he was deliberate and distinct, so that one could follow the workings of his mind and trace each thought to its conclusion. His Hamlet was, undoubtedly, the greatest of his own age or of any other, for history does not record an actor who possessed, as he did, so many inherent qualities for the interpretation of the character. Of all the actors that I have ever seen

in the part,—and I have seen many,—none equaled him. Edwin Booth was always effective in the reading of soliloquies, than which there is nothing more difficult for an actor. In the soliloquies of Iago the scheming deviltry of Iago's mind was apparent as he gave utterance to each thought.

Booth's Theater was in existence from 1869 to 1883. After Mr. Booth was compelled, through his losses, to go into bankruptcy, the theater from time to time was leased by different managers, who conducted it with varying success or failure. The last lessee was John Stetson. I had played there on the opening night and I was business manager for Mr. Stetson when it closed with Madame Modjeska as Juliet in "Romeo and Juliet," April 30, 1883. Andrew Boyd had been caretaker of the theater and ticket-taker during its existence; he took in the first and last ticket presented for admittance at the main entrance.

The invasion of West Twenty-third Street by the retail business was the forerunner of the doom of Booth's Theater, and in the course of time it was sold and converted into stores.

The tours of Booth and Barrett made a fortune for Edwin Booth, so he bought a large double house on Gramercy Park and converted it into a club house, which was founded in 1888,

and named the Players. Mr. Booth desired that the club should be devoted to social intercourse between representative members of the dramatic profession and the kindred professions of literature, painting, sculpture, and music, and the patrons of the arts. He requested the exclusion of dramatic critics from membership of the club, in order to avoid possible bitterness and controversies where all should be good-fellowship and harmony. He was wise in this, for critics are sometimes severe and actors are usually sensitive. But this rule excluded from the club one of Mr. Booth's dearest friends, Mr. William Winter, then the dramatic critic of the New York *Tribune.*

On "Founders' Night,"—New Year's Eve, —only members of the club are admitted to the house, and it is the custom on the stroke of twelve for the president of the club to drink first from the large loving-cup filled with wine, which is then passed to the members, who drink in turn. On one of these occasions when I was present General Horace Porter in his speech used the following appropriate simile in referring to Mr. Booth's retiring disposition and modesty:

"Edwin Booth is like the silent, untiring worker on some magnificent tapestry; the

beauty of his artistic work is seen upon the surface, but the worker is behind, patiently laboring unseen."

Mr. Booth reserved the upper floor of the club house for his living apartment. He died there June 7, 1893, when he was between fifty-nine and sixty. The room in which he died is held sacred and preserved as he left it, and on the anniversary of his death a large wreath is placed on the bed he died in. In the club house, in glass cases, are preserved and treasured the costumes he wore in his different characters, and the Players Club remains to-day a monument to his generosity.

Edwin Booth's last appearance on the stage was in Brooklyn, April 4, 1891, as Hamlet. He undoubtedly inherited his genius from his father, though it usually skips one or more generations. In all the arts the atavism of genius is observable.

CHAPTER V

In 1870 and 1871 The Varieties Club of New Orleans was building on Canal Street in that city a theater that was to be called The Varieties Theater. One of the members of the club leased the theater and engaged Lawrence Barrett as manager, with the understanding that Mr. Barrett was to play his usual star engagements throughout the country, including a four or six weeks' engagement in New Orleans at The Varieties Theater. Mr. Barrett, who at that time was supporting Edwin Booth at Booth's Theater in New York, organized a large company of capable persons, most of whom were New York favorites, and assigned two representatives to each of the important lines of business. I was eager to sever my connection with Booth's Theater, so I gladly accepted Mr. Barrett's offer to become a member of the company he was forming.

As The Varieties Theater was not to open until the following December, I,—with John Howson and George Holland, Jr., who had also been engaged by Mr. Barrett,—secured a short engagement with the Mark Smith Comedy

Company. This company was managed by and had the pecuniary support of Hart Jackson, who made the version of "The Two Orphans" that had a long run at the Union Square Theater, in New York. The repertoire of the Mark Smith Comedy Company consisted of "The School for Scandal," "London Assurance," "Heir at Law," "The Old English Gentleman," "Nine Points of the Law," and "The Poor Gentleman."

After having appeared in a number of smaller cities with only moderate success we were to open at McVickar's Theater in Chicago for a four weeks' engagement, but the week before we were due in Chicago the great fire of October 8-10, 1871, destroyed a large part of the city, including McVickar's Theater. Our company was playing in Indianapolis at the time. Some place in which to appear the following week had to be secured hurriedly in order to keep the company together until the route could be re-arranged. As our most successful engagement had been in Louisville, only a short time before, an effort was made to secure an immediate return engagement there. But this could not be done, as another company was booked to appear, so our manager did what he thought to be the next best thing. He decided that we should play for the first

four nights of the following week in New Albany, a small town in Indiana, just across the river from Louisville. He thought that many people from Louisville would cross the bridge to see our performances in New Albany, but only a very few did.

The opera house was over the town market, the odor from which permeated the auditorium, stage, and dressing-rooms. There were only two dressing-rooms, so all the ladies dressed in one and all the gentlemen, including the star, in the other. One may form some idea of the theater when I say that the proscenium opening was only about twenty feet wide and about twelve feet high. Our financial success here was small, as we played the "Heir at Law" to less than fifty people at each performance. This, like most of the old comedies, has an epilogue, or "tag," to be addressed to the audience by the different characters after the ending of the play. Dr. Pangloss has a few lines to speak, ending with "For I'm an LL.D. and an A double S." On the last night of our stay the darkey that attended to the old-fashioned drop curtain,—that rolled up from the bottom on a long barrel,—had fallen asleep. The prompter shook him to awaken him, saying, "Be ready." The old darkey, misunderstanding, started to lower the curtain before

Mr. Smith had finished speaking Dr. Pangloss' tag lines. When the curtain was almost down Mr. Smith threw himself upon the stage and shouted to the audience, "I'm an LL.D. and an A double S." And as the curtain touched the stage he rolled over and added, "For playing over a meat market in New Albany I am surely an A double S."

Shortly after this the company closed and returned to New York, and John Howson, George Holland, and I went on to New Orleans to await the commencement of our engagement there.

Mark Smith claimed that the actor's art was above all others. He would often express his pride in being an actor. He endeavored at all times to be dignified, but he was sometimes a trifle pompous. I was standing in front of the old Louisville Hotel one day with him and a friend of his when a gentleman approached and was introduced to us.

"Oh, Mark Smith! I'm delighted to meet you, sir. I had the pleasure of seeing your troupe last night at the theater."

Mr. Smith at once assumed his most dignified manner and said: "Not my troupe, sir, but my company. We are not itinerant acrobats nor performing monkeys."

The gentleman raised his hat and said: "I

beg your pardon, sir, and I thank you. I shall observe the distinction in future."

We heard later that this same gentleman had killed one man and wounded another on the "field of honor." Fortunately the episode terminated in our adjourning to the bar of the hotel and imbibing several mint juleps, that most delicious but insidious concoction of the South.

The Varieties Theater in New Orleans opened Monday evening, December 4, 1871. The opening address, written especially for the occasion by E. C. Hancock, Esq., was delivered by Lawrence Barrett, and the play of the evening, presented for the first time in New Orleans, was Alberry's four-act comedy entitled "Coquettes." In the cast were George Clarke, Dominic Murray, Stuart Robson, T. J. Hind, Frank Murdock, Augustus Pitou, George Holland, Jr., Charles Bradley, Augusta Dargon, Georgie Reynolds, Marie Gordon, and Ione Burke. More than one half of the company did not appear on that occasion. The people in the cast, with one exception, were well received, and their individual performances were favorably commented on, with the exception of Stuart Robson's. His peculiar voice was strange to the audience and his comedy methods new to them. The only time he made

the people laugh was when he spoke a few lines of sentiment in his part. But in less than a month, after he had played a number of comedy parts, including Captain Crosstree in the burlesque of "Black-eyed Susan," the public pronounced him the funniest comedian that had ever appeared in New Orleans. He became a great favorite, and his benefit toward the end of the season was the largest of any member of the company. He said to me: "I've had the same experience in other cities. The people have to get accustomed to my voice before they think me funny."

A number of seats, railed off just behind the musicians, were reserved for the members of The Varieties Club. Between the acts they could retire to their club rooms, which were in the basement, and the prompter rang a bell located in one of the club rooms, notifying the members that the play or one of the acts was about to begin. The members, in obedience to a rule of the club, were invariably in their seats before the curtain went up. There were never any late stragglers to disturb the players or the audience. The expenses of this theater were probably larger than those of any other theater in the country at that time, and though the patronage was good, the weekly losses continued to accumulate. At the end of a few

months the manager notified Mr. Barrett that he had no more money to lose and that he would have to retire. Then Mr. Barrett came to New Orleans at once and assumed the management himself. He cut down expenses by curtailing the company, giving two weeks' notice to each member as he had a legal right to do, and he continued the season without further loss and without reducing the salaries of those members of the company that he retained. The elimination of his own salary of $250 a week was a big item in itself.

At the termination of the regular season George Ryer engaged some of the members of the company, at reduced salaries, for a short summer season at the old St. Charles Theater, in New Orleans. "The Octoroon," by Dion Boucicault, was selected for the opening play. Many people had the impression that the play favored Republican politics and ridiculed the South and its institutions, so the manager, in his preliminary notices, endeavored to disabuse the public's mind of this error. He stated that politics was not alluded to by any of the characters, and that the play was a domestic drama of Southern life, as it existed before the war. Notwithstanding these announcements, it was feared that there would be a demonstration of disapproval on the opening night. Would a

Southern audience accept a play with an octoroon as its heroine? The play had met with great success in the North, which fact, in itself, caused the New Orleans public to be suspicious of it. The animosities created by the war were still strong; the people had not yet forgotten the occupation of their city by Gen. Ben Butler and his Northern troops.

The following story of the play is necessary for those unacquainted with it:

Judge Peyton, the head of a Southern family, living on the Terrebourne Plantation in Louisiana, is supposed to have died before the action of the play begins. He leaves a widow, a son,—George Peyton,—and his natural daughter Zoe, by a quadroon slave. Zoe has been educated and treated with respect by the family. Jacob McClusky, the overseer of the plantation, falls in love with her, but she detests him. To possess her he forecloses mortgages he holds against the estate and ruins the family. He has found that Zoe's free papers were made out while a judgment for debt stood recorded against the estate, which invalidates Zoe's freedom. Therefore she is sold with the other slaves and bought by McClusky for $25,000. Before the sale, however, a letter was expected by Mrs. Peyton from England, with a large amount of money, the use of which

would relieve the estate and prevent its sale. McClusky, knowing this, waylays the negro boy, Paul, who has the mail bag, and kills him while he is sitting on a rock before a camera. An Indian companion of the boy has set the camera and run away in fear, while the picture is being taken. It is at this moment that McClusky commits the deed which shows on the plate and convicts him. He escapes to the cane-brake and is tracked by the Indian, who kills him. The play ends happily, Zoe being bought by George Peyton and freed.

In the slave market scene when Zoe (played by Isabel Freeman) was on the block, and I, as McClusky, after outbidding George Peyton (played by George Clarke), took hold of her roughly, saying, "Come here, you belong to me," at least a dozen people in different parts of the house cried out: "Shoot him, George!" "Kill him!"

That clever dramatist, Dion Boucicault, had so developed his story and had so dramatically constructed this particular scene that, notwithstanding racial prejudices, a Southern audience sympathized with the slave girl who had negro blood in her veins.

For the season of 1872-73 John A. Stevens engaged me as leading man and stage manager

of his stock company, with headquarters at Coates' Opera House, Kansas City. Stevens had a circuit comprising Kansas City, Leavenworth, St. Joseph, and Omaha. He played stars when he could get them, and when he could not he constituted himself a star, playing numerous parts, in tragedy and comedy, —it mattered not to Stevens which so long as it was a star rôle. During the season he announced that he had secured Edwin Forrest to play six performances in Kansas City and two in each of the other towns.

George Clarke was Mr. Forrest's leading man at that time, and he came in advance to rehearse the company in six plays. A week later Mr. Forrest arrived and was driven to the Coates House, which was on top of a hill, with no other building in sight except the Opera House diagonally opposite. Mr. Coates owned all the property in that section and had built the hotel and Opera House there, expecting that the city as it grew would advance up the hill. Mr. Forrest was suffering with gout and could not attend any of the rehearsals. I sent my card to him and was invited to his room. He was looking out of the window as I entered, and he limped toward me and gave me his hand. It was the first time in six years that we had met.

After we were seated, he said, "You saw me looking out of the window as you came in?"

"Yes, sir," I replied.

"Why, do you suppose?"

"I can't say, sir."

"This is Kansas City, is it not?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I've been looking for the city; I can't see it out of any of my windows. Is that the theater opposite?"

"It is."

"Are you a member of the company?"

"Yes, sir."

"Are there any people in this place who go to the theater?"

"Every seat in the house is sold for every one of your performances, sir."

He smiled and said, "Well, I suppose that should be some consolation to an actor, even if he is suffering with the gout."

The second week we played in Leavenworth, —on Monday and Tuesday nights,—and the theater there was an old hall with one balcony. In the center of the stage was a large post supporting the roof. On entering from the center, one had to dodge this post in going down the stage to the right or left, and the post always "held the center," to the envy of some of the actors. When Mr. Forrest, limping, made his

entrance through the center door he saw the post, paused, eyed it for a moment, then hobbled toward the footlights to acknowledge his reception. All through his first soliloquy of Hamlet he leaned against the post resting his gouty foot, and he did the same thing while he was speaking the rest of Hamlet's soliloquies. After the performance he said to me: "I wish we could take that post along with us to Omaha and St. Joseph. I found it very comforting."

After Mr. Forrest left us some of our regular patrons said that they liked Stevens in "Richelieu" and "Hamlet" better than they liked him. They had seen a great deal of Stevens, and only a little of Mr. Forrest,—and then at advanced prices; besides, the theatergoers of Kansas City and those other towns were not esthetic at that time. However, it is surprising how blind the public and the critics can be to the shortcomings of actors whom they see frequently, or with whom they are on friendly terms.

Only a few years before he died Mr. Forrest gave the greatest of all his performances as King Lear. He had perfected his art, and had grown more psychical and less physical. As he subdued the physical he became more emotionally convincing; but his popularity had

waned, and his performances at the Fourteenth Street Theater in New York were sparsely attended. He was acknowledged to be the foremost American tragedian until Edwin Booth, with his genius and better art, won his way to popularity and took from him that proud distinction.

During that same season our company went to Fort Scott, to play a week, with John A. Stevens as the star. The only five swords in the company were mine, and they were common property when they were needed by my associates, but I always carried them and jealously guarded them against loss. Ours was the first dramatic company that had ever appeared in Fort Scott, and there was a crowd in front of the hotel when we reached it in the large 'bus that had met us at the station. As we alighted from the 'bus one of the crowd cried out, pointing to me, "There's the fellow that swallows the swords." They had evidently had a circus there with its side shows.

That same season Maggie Mitchell, supported by our company, inaugurated Tootle's Opera House in St. Joseph, Missouri,—at that time the handsomest and most costly theater in the West.

After I had closed my season with John A. Stevens' Company, Barney Macauley engaged

me for a late spring and early summer season at Wood's Theater in Cincinnati, where I, appearing as the "fiery Tybalt" in "Romeo and Juliet," first met and played with Mary Anderson. J. Newton Gotthold, a well-known leading man of the time, supported her as Romeo, and Barney Macauley was the Mercutio.

Mary Anderson made her first appearance on the stage in Louisville, Ky., November 25, 1875, as Juliet, in "Romeo and Juliet," and she flashed into stardom without having passed through the experience of playing minor parts. She made her début equipped with a small repertoire of star rôles, to which she later made many additions. At that time she had the freshness of youth and a most charming personality; and she was a born actress. Her arms, however, were a trifle long, and her gestures, while effective in response to the emotions that swayed her, were not particularly graceful. But her voice was strong, flexible, and pleasing, and her reading was well-modulated, intelligent, and comprehensive. She had that innate quality that enabled her to feel and express the higher emotions; her acting was impulsive, and varied in its effectiveness. Sometimes she could thrill her hearers, but she lacked those subtleties of the actor's art, which, had she possessed them, would have made it

possible for her to thrill them at all times. But even up to the day when she retired from the stage to marry, she had not fully mastered the art of acting.

I witnessed her first appearance in London, under the management of Henry Abbey, at the Lyceum Theater. The play was "Ingomar." "Handsome" Jack Barnes played the title rôle and Mary Anderson played Parthenia. The advertisements in the newspapers were judiciously modest, simply announcing:

FIRST APPEARANCE IN LONDON OF THE AMERICAN ACTRESS—

MARY ANDERSON

In the Five Act Play of

INGOMAR

(The Barbarian)

Ingomar ..... Jack Barnes
Parthenia ..... Miss Anderson

The line for the gallery, as was the custom on first nights at the Lyceum, had been formed on the street since daylight. When the overture started the house was filled in every part, and from my seat in the balcony I could see the mass of people in the gallery, mostly men, many of them in their shirt sleeves, while in

MARY ANDERSON

Facing page 97

the stalls below me and in the balcony the men and women were in full evening dress.

When Miss Anderson made her entrance in the first act she was given a most cordial and prolonged reception. Indeed, her stately appearance alone justified it, and as she came down the stage smiling and bowing she was apparently not a bit nervous. As the act proceeded her subdued acting and the pitch of her voice, which could not have reached all parts of the house, puzzled me. It was not the work of the Mary Anderson that I had formerly known. It was of the "drawing-room school of acting," then in vogue in London. Here was an American actress with too much mettle, it seemed, and she must be curbed, as she evidently was, by some fool stage manager who had rehearsed her in the play. This silly school of acting was copied by us and prevailed with us for a while, but fortunately it was short-lived both here and in England.

At the end of the first act the applause was trifling. The people within my hearing remarked: "A most charming personality," "How well she wears her Grecian gown," "She looks as if she had just stepped from a canvas of Alma Tadema." But not a word was said about her acting.

During the *entr'acte* I went out into the lobby

for a smoke, and Henry Abbey asked me, "How is it going, Gus?"

"Very badly, in my opinion," I replied. "What's the matter with her? Why doesn't she let herself out?"

He answered, laughing: "That's just what we don't want her to do. She has been coached in the style of acting they want in London and the only kind they'll stand for."

My suspicions were confirmed, but he interrupted my objections with: "Oh, shut up, Gus. Come along and have a drink," and we did.

The curtain was just about to go up on the second act when I reached my seat. During the early part of the act Miss Anderson continued to speak in the same conversational key, emotionless as some beautiful statue, and she had not yet affected or won her audience.

"If she keeps this up, she will surely be a failure," I fumed. "Why doesn't she let herself out? If she would only act as she did in Cincinnati!"

While these thoughts were passing through my mind something happened. A costermonger, in his shirt sleeves, sitting in the front row of the gallery, cried out, "A little louder, Mary, a little louder!" The audience was startled. There was a moment of silence, and

then came a big outburst of laughter in which Miss Anderson joined. She always had a keen sense of humor, and was not averse to an occasional bit of quiet, innocent guying. As she turned and walked up the stage her shoulders were shaking with laughter. Jack Barnes joined her and she talked earnestly to him until the audience quieted. As she turned and came down the stage there was an expression of determination on her face that seemed to me to say: "I'm going to be as I was. I'm going to act as I did in America!"

She was saved. She started her scene with Ingomar a little in advance of where the dialogue had been interrupted, and she let out her beautiful voice so that her every word was heard in every part of the house. She forgot the audience. Throwing off the yoke of restraint that had been put upon her, she was Parthenia, the Greek-maiden, hostage of the barbarian that she would tame. She gave full vent to her emotions. Her audience was moved; she was acting; and after the curtain was down she was called before it again and again. At the end of the next act, where, after subduing Ingomar, she takes his spear and shield and, with her arm stretched out, points toward Massilia, she was superb. The applause started as the curtain was descending

and swelled into a tumult. "Our Mary" had triumphed and I wanted to hug that costermonger in the gallery! This audience of Londoners after all was human. Nationality matters naught; all humanity is catholic and responsive when appealed to by genius, and Mary Anderson was a genius. Had she remained on the stage, she would surely have perfected her art; and she would be to-day our greatest actress.

CHAPTER VI

My observation has convinced me that an actor or actress does not make a pronounced hit until the opportunity comes to him or her to play an important part, and a part peculiarly suited to his or her personality. This opportunity rarely comes until after a person has had years of experience, for experience alone will give to him perfect control of himself on the stage and that knowledge of the art of acting that will enable him to express himself effectively. And an actor can give the best that is in him to the interpretation of only such characters as he is physically and psychically fitted to present. However, a personality that is suited to some particular part, without art and self-control, means nothing; but when fine personality, self-control, and knowledge of the art of acting are combined in one person then that person is indeed an actor.

Mr. Charles Frohman once made a revival of Sardou's "Diplomacy" at the Empire Theater, New York, with his most capable stock company. William Faversham was the leading man, and he claimed the part of Henri Beau-

clerc, which formerly had been played by Lester Wallack. Mr. Frohman was reluctantly compelled to accede to Mr. Faversham's claim, and he cast Charles Richmond for the part of Capt. Julien Beauclerc, which formerly had been played by Harry Montague, who was at one time the leading juvenile man of Wallack's stock company. Faversham and Richmond were both good actors, but in this instance they were not rightly cast, and neither of them was effective in his performance. Had the parts been reversed the play would have had a better interpretation. No one realized this fact more than Mr. Frohman, but, hampered by the terms of Faversham's contract, which gave him a choice of leading parts, he was powerless.

I had a similar experience with my traveling stock company, for which I engaged some of the most prominent and capable actors and actresses of the time. In the company were Nelson Wheatcroft, William Faversham, W. H. Thompson, George Backus, Frederick Perry, George M. Leslie, P. W. Shannon, Gus Frankel, W. Alfred Palmer, Minnie Seligman, Ida Vernon, Adelaide Stanhope, Jane Stuart, Vida Croley, Frances Drake, and Annette Leland. After organizing my company I secured from Clyde Fitch "A Modern Match" and from Martha Morton "Geoffrey Middleton, Gentle-

man.'' I would have fared better had I first obtained the plays and then selected people of even less prominence to cast them. Nearly all my contracts called for certain lines of business, and I was obliged to cast the plays accordingly, irrespective of personalities. The company played thirty-four weeks, and appeared in all the large cities; but I lost considerable money, and, having learned my lesson, at the end of the season I abandoned the idea of a stock company at high prices. All managers have done the same, and I doubt whether the stock company at high prices can ever be profitably revived. First get the play; it is the surer and safer way. There are always suitable actors to be found for the proper interpretation of any play, if the manager be experienced and careful in his selections.

It has been claimed that no actress can truly portray maternal love unless she has been a mother, but this is a mistaken idea. If an experienced actress can imagine a mother's love, and if she have the requisite emotional traits, she will strike the human chords true in a scene with a child, for all women have the mother instinct. Indeed, some of the most affecting interpretations of motherly love have been those presented by childless actresses.

Surely Maude Adams could effectively ex-

press the joys and sorrows of a mother's heart. How great this charming little actress would be, if nature, when endowing her with temperament, and the power to feel and to affect others, also had given her the physical attributes necessary for the portrayal of great rôles. Her Juliet, in the earlier acts of the play, was the most girlish and ingenuous that I ever saw. In the tragedy of the later acts she failed, not because she did not fully realize the conflict raging in Juliet's soul, but because she was unable to give physical expression to it, and the potion scene, with its horrors of mental visions, demanded more force than she possessed. However, in all her rôles, Maude Adams has shown her mentality; she never fails to grasp and to express the most subtle psychology of a character. Indeed, this actress possesses a quality that is very rare on the stage. I can recall only one other actress who had it,—Maggie Mitchell, as Fanchon, dancing in the moonlight with her imaginary partner. This quality is not ingenuousness, not abandon, not mischievousness; it is all these and something more. I call it impishness.

Minnie Seligman was another actress that lacked the physical power to fulfil the promise her acting once gave. Her art was not perfect, but she possessed temperament, and also

MAGGIE MITCHELL

As Fanchon

Facing page 104

intensity in expressing emotions. Unfortunately, she had a face and figure more suitable to comedy and soubrette parts than to emotional ones.

The late Stuart Robson, who was a man of culture and a student of Shakespeare, once said to me: "My professional career has been a disappointment. I have clearly defined in my mind my conception of Hamlet and of Shylock. I have the soul of a tragedian with the high squeaky voice of a low comedian. When in some part I have had an emotional speech to deliver I have felt the meaning of the lines and tears have come into my eyes, but when I spoke the audience laughed."

Many comedians, after attaining prominence, crave this higher sphere of serious acting. They grow tired of making people laugh; they want to make them cry. Like poor Stuart Robson, they themselves may be able to feel, but they fail to transmit their impressions to their hearers.

An historical anecdote has been told of Joseph Grimaldi, the noted English pantomimist and clown, who from 1806 to 1825 kept all London laughing at his antics. At one time he suffered from some nervous ailment that made him morose and taciturn, and his friends advised him to consult a renowned doctor of

the day. The doctor told him to seek amusements, to go and see Grimaldi at least twice a week, whereupon he looked at the doctor, with a sad smile, and said, "Alas, I am Grimaldi."

I have heard it said that no actress can play Juliet effectively until she is thirty and has had eight or ten years' experience on the stage. She may need those years of experience for the tragic scenes, but will she look the girl of the earlier scenes? At thirty an actress is no longer an ingénue; in young girls' parts her ingenuousness is usually forced and unnatural.

Adelaide Neilson was the only actress I ever saw as Juliet who was true and potent in all her scenes. She was a beautiful brunette, with wonderfully expressive eyes and a youthful figure; and she was a genius; her art was almost perfect. She was only seventeen years old when she first played Juliet. I saw her début in this country in 1872 at Booth's Theater, which was then under the management of Jarrett and Palmer. She was then twenty-four years old. She came to us with a reputation earned in London and the Provinces, at a time when she was the acknowledged queen of the English stage. On her opening night as Juliet she fascinated the audience by her beauty and personality the moment she appeared upon the stage, and during her perform-

ADELAIDE NEILSON

As Juliet

Facing page 106

ance she stirred her hearers to fervor bordering on frenzied enthusiasm. I once played Oliver with her in "As You Like It." While I was telling her how Orlando had been slain by a lion the attention of the audience was riveted upon her. They merely heard the words I spoke, while she was conveying to them the effect of my words by the tremors of her body, the despair of her clinched hands, the agonized expression of her face and of her tearful eyes. This transmitting of effect without the aid of words was a stroke of genius, expressed by the supreme art of acting. Adelaide Neilson made four visits to this country, although she died at Paris, France, August 15, 1880, at the early age of thirty-two.

It is not difficult for actors and actresses to make an audience understand what they feel, or are supposed to feel, if they express their feelings in words; but to make an audience realize how much they are affected by what is spoken by others is consummate art. George Arliss in his performance of "Disraeli" achieves this effect of pantomime in the last act when a telegram is delivered to him. His audience can read his every thought; it sympathizes with him in his agony when in the midst of his great triumph he holds unopened

in his hand the telegram that he fears will inform him of the death of his beloved wife. At this moment George Arliss reaches the acme of the actor's art. The dramatist, Louis N. Parker, was inspired when he brought the great statesman's wife upon the scene from the opposite side of the stage, and had her place her hand on her husband's shoulder; to have her do so was just what the audience at that moment craved, and the expression of George Arliss' face as he turned and saw his wife conveyed more than words could express.

The play of "Disraeli," produced by Liebler & Co., was unusually well interpreted by a carefully selected cast, and was admirably presented. The stage management was excellent and the correctness of detail was especially noticeable. Toward the end of the last act the bringing on and lining up of the court lackies aided greatly the appeal made to the imagination of the audience, which could feel the presence of the queen in the adjoining room. The lining up of these lackies was better stage art and more effective than would have been the bringing in of the queen upon the scene.

The lack of attention on the part of some actors to what others are saying too often destroys the value of an important scene. How

can we expect an audience to be impressed and moved if the people on the stage fail to show interest in what is transpiring?

I have said that in the old stock company days one could count the soldiers of the armies of Macbeth and Richard III. I saw Henry Irving's production of "Macbeth" in London, and when the army of Macbeth appeared it came on in groups, without order or discipline, a horde of semibarbarian warriors, with cross-gartered leggings, hide-covered shields, battle-axes and cross-bows, talking and gesticulating. They kept crossing the stage and disappearing from sight. At the end of the dialogue between Macbeth and his officers the straggling army was still crossing, and when the scene changed there seemed to be thousands of warriors yet to come; the audience never saw them all. For the following scene when MacDuff's army appeared the same effect was produced. In the battle scene the fighting was not all in sight of the audience; it seemed to be raging as fiercely off the stage in the distance. From every angle of sight the audience could see men fighting off the stage as well as on it. The distant clash of arms, the cries and cheers, and the rushing on and off the scene of fighting groups gave the illusion of a great battle in which thousands were engaged. I was

greatly impressed. This appeal to the imagination was something new to me in stage management. I have also seen it used most effectively by David Belasco in some of his productions. Indeed, there is always value in this appeal to the imagination of an audience when it is properly made by the stage manager.

We have a number of capable stage managers to-day, but they are overworked. It is not unusual for a producer to engage one stage manager to rehearse all his productions, which may be as many as twenty in one season. Under such conditions, no stage manager has sufficient time to study and properly to rehearse a play, and it is impossible for him to do justice to any one play when, as is sometimes the case, he is rehearsing three companies in different plays the same day.

A capable and experienced producer and stage manager like David Belasco, who stages at the most three or four productions in a season, will usually obtain results satisfactory to the public and to himself, for the best work accomplished is that which can be put aside, if only for a short interval, before it is taken up again. Ideas come to us unexpectedly at moments when the mind is restful. Many a valuable thought at such times has been jotted down

on a scrap of paper and sometimes on a shirt cuff.

I have seen a number of plays that I have considered worthy of success fail because they were improperly cast or too hurriedly produced. In an emergency an effort is sometimes made to rush through the preparation of a production and also the rehearsals, in order to supply the pressing needs of a theater. The likelihood that the play will succeed is thus minimized. It would be better and cheaper in the end to close the theater until the play is ready for presentation, for the public of to-day demands the best, which is to be had from only those producers who give intelligent thought and time to their productions. Although many managers spend money lavishly on their productions they do not always spend it judiciously. The fortunate ones are those who present only a few plays each season, and who fully realize that the compensation to an audience is in what they offer behind the curtain as well as in the way a play is interpreted. The number of theaters now existing require many new productions each season, and they are made by many producers, who, by the way. are always optimistic. When a manager accepts a play, and gets it ready for production, he is confident it will be a success. He may

have had recent failures but that does not dim his optimism, nor deter him from trying again. This is fortunate, for out of six or more costly productions he often obtains but one or two successes. He has looked for more, but he is philosophical; he knows that with these successes he can pay for his failures, and perhaps make some money besides. Therefore a manager is as much a speculator as is the speculator in stocks and grain.

Many unexpected things may happen on the opening night to decide the fate of a play,—the substitution of an understudy for an advertised star of reputation, as was the case with Mr. A. H. Woods, on the occasion of the first performance of "Gypsy Love" at the Globe Theater, New York; the ringing down of the curtain, through mistake, before the end of an act; a stormy night, followed by a week of bad weather; all these unlooked for handicaps are difficult to overcome quickly, if indeed they can ever be overcome. I attribute my loss on "The Power of the Press," during its run at Wallack's old theater, Broadway and Thirteenth street, to a terrific thunder and lightning storm that occurred during the first performance, which made the audience nervous and inattentive. Then the patter of rain on the tin roof made it impossible for anyone to hear

what was being said on the stage, and these conditions lasted for fully half an hour. "The Power of the Press" played successfully throughout the country for five years, and but for that storm on the opening night I might have made money at Wallack's Theater. I had made a contract with Henry Miner for the appearance of my stock company at the Fifth Avenue Theater for eight weeks, commencing early in October, and, if successful, for six additional weeks in the spring. But the theater was destroyed by fire; it could not be rebuilt in time for my date, and I was obliged to open in Minneapolis. When I did come to New York in the spring I had to play at the Union Square Theater, then under the management of J. M. Hill, and at a time when the theater was on the decline.

During my first season at Booth's Theater as business manager for John Stetson, when he was the lessee, the profits were only a trifle over $4,000, and many good attractions had been played. As the expenses of the theater were very large, it was decided to take an additional financial risk, and to make productions the following season. Charles R. Thorn had not renewed with A. M. Palmer for the Union Square Theater, and Mr. Stetson engaged him at a salary of one hundred dollars a performance.

The following plays were selected,—"The Corsican Brothers," Charles Fechter's version of "Monte Cristo," "The Three Guardsmen," and "The Dead Heart." The Fechter version of "Monte Cristo" was the property of Mr. Stetson, as it had come to him in the dramatic library of the Globe Theater, Boston, when he assumed its management. Charles Fechter had formerly been the stock star and stage manager of the Globe Theater; by the terms of his contract all his plays produced at the Globe became the property of the theater, and he retained the right to play them when he appeared in other cities as a star.

Henry Irving had successfully revived the "Corsican Brothers" in London, so we decided to open the season with that play at Booth's Theater. The play was rehearsed for three weeks, and Charles R. Thorn attended all the rehearsals. The production was elaborate and costly, a feature being made of the ball room scene by the introduction of suitable speciality performers. On the opening night the theater was filled to its capacity, the audience was enthusiastic, and the newspapers the following morning were loud in their praises of the performance and the production. During the day over ten thousand dollars were taken in at the box office for seats in advance. Success seemed

assured. That Tuesday evening about six o'clock while I was at home at dinner a messenger boy came with a note from Mr. Stetson urging me to hasten to the theater. I went at once and found him in the lobby awaiting me.

"Read that," he said, handing me a note.

It was from Mrs. Charles R. Thorn informing him that her husband was in bed sick, that he would not be able to appear that night, and of course we were compelled to close the theater. I went to Mr. Thorn's house and found him in bed.

"How do you feel, Charlie?" I asked.

He answered, "I'm a very sick man, Gus; I'll never leave this bed alive."

He never did, and he died shortly afterward. The following day I secured J. Clinton Hall, who had played the part, and put him on that night. Frank Bangs, who was playing the part of M. Château-Renaud, studied Charles R. Thorn's part and appeared in it at the Saturday matinée. When the public found that Charles R. Thorn would not reappear we had to return over six thousand dollars of the advance sale. We kept the play on at Booth's Theater for six weeks and then sent it out on the road, but we succeeded in getting back only part of the cost of the production. These are

only a few of the many chances that the producing manager takes,—chances that the public knows nothing about.

After the "Corsican Brothers" we presented "Monte Cristo,"—having secured James O'Neil, who, although it was his first appearance in the title rôle, achieved an instantaneous success, and continued to play it for many years afterward.

John Stetson had very little education. His boyhood days had been spent on the streets of Boston as a shoe black and newsboy, when he knew what it was to hustle for the necessaries of life. He was a man of much brain power, shrewd, observing, and honest in his business dealings,—so honest indeed that it was often said of him that his word was as good as his bond. However, he was ever on the alert and suspicious of others, and although he was exacting, he was always fair and appreciative of good service. Humorous stories and an occasional *faux pas* have been attributed to him, and the following stories he admitted to me were true. One time he and Mr. Isaac Rich were managers of the "Howard Athenaeum," a variety theater in Boston, and it was Mr. Stetson's custom to stand in the wings the first night of each week and watch the different performers. If an act was not favorably received

by the audience, he would at once take it off the programme and substitute another. One opening night a team of old-time "song and dance artists" appeared, dressed in long black Prince Albert coats, white vests, black pantaloons, and high silk hats. They began to sing "Where Are the Friends of Our Youth," and Mr. Stetson called to them, "Come off." They paid no attention to him. At the end of the song as they bowed themselves off the stage the audience indulged in catcalls, whistling, and shouts of derision, and they were about to go on the stage again when Mr. Stetson seized each of them by the collar.

"Hold on; where are you going?" he demanded.

"Let go of us; we're going to take our encore," was the reply.

"Oh, no, you're not."

"Let go of us. Who are you?"

"I'm John Stetson."

"Oh! we beg your pardon, Mr. Stetson; we didn't know you."

The catcalls and whistling continued.

"What was that song you were just singing?" asked Mr. Stetson.

" 'Where Are the Friends of Our Youth?' "

"The treasurer will pay your salary in the morning for this week, and you go and hunt

for your friends. I'm d—n sure they're not here."

At another time a European troupe was to appear, for the first time in this country, in tableaux, representing celebrated statues. Mr. Stetson watched the rehearsal as the different groups appeared, but made no comment. Later, when the tableau curtains were opened showing the "Three Graces," he stood up saying, "That's good." When the curtains closed he said to the manager of the troupe, "What do you call that last one?"

"The three graces, Mr. Stetson."

"Well, that's the best of all. They're great. You want to put on twelve of those graces."

John Stetson's favorite musical instrument was the cornet, and he always insisted on having the best cornet player obtainable in the orchestras of his theaters. One summer he heard an exceptionally good player in Washington and engaged him for his Globe Theater, Boston. A few days before the opening of the season, John C. Mullaly, his musical director, was rehearsing the orchestra in the overture and *entr'actes* music for the opening week when Mr. Stetson quietly stole into the auditorium and sat in one of the back seats to hear his cornet player. In the overture the cornet had considerable to do and Mr. Stetson was de-

lighted, but in the first *entr'acte* selection the cornet had only a few bars. Mr. Stetson listened for some time, when, becoming impatient, he strolled down the center aisle, shouting to the leader, "What's the matter with the cornet that he's not playing?"

The leader answered, "The cornet has a long rest here, Mr. Stetson."

"Rest be d—n; I don't pay him for resting. I hired him to play."

The managers of first-class theaters, outside of New York, have grown rich since stock companies at high prices were abandoned and new business methods were introduced. Formerly they had to carry the entire expense of company and theater, but now they have only the expenses of the theater to protect. The producing managers send them their successes; their failures they send to the store house. New York managers owning theaters are obliged to risk the making of many productions each season for their own theaters, while the out-of-town manager, not having to take the risk of producing, is in a safer position. Even if during the season a few plays come to him that fail to please his patrons he finds that he makes a goodly profit anyway, for the majority of his plays do please and draw large houses.

It is not difficult now for any producer to make a pictorially correct production, if he is willing to pay the price, and most of them are. We have to-day better scenic artists than we ever had before. Some of them are at their best when painting exterior scenes, and others when painting interiors; it is for the producer to know their individual merits. The art of scene painting has advanced with other features of stage art, and it behooves the producer to employ only the best scenic artists, for while the building of scenery is costly, it is economy to have the best.

One of these artists, given a play to read, will submit colored models of scenes, constructed half an inch to the foot, which will suggest what the scene is to be. These models are placed in a box with a miniature stage, electrically lighted, so that the producer can see the scene lighted up as the audience will see it. He can then send for some stage carpenter who builds scenery by contract, and who in less than an hour, after measuring the models, and some figuring, will give him his price for building the entire production. If the play to be produced is a costume play, an artist who is familiar with the costumes of the period of the play will read the play, and furnish colored plates of the costumes and of the furniture and properties

required that will be absolutely accurate. The color scheme of the different scenes will be indicated by the plates, and there will be no clashing of colors to mar the general effect. Under these circumstances, it is an easy matter for a producer to be artistic and effective in his productions, but he must allow the necessary time required to accomplish this end. The public,—educated to recognize correctness by modern painters of merit whose pictures are invariably true in all these details,—is keen in detecting poorly painted scenery, and inappropriate costumes and furniture. It is almost impossible to find an illustration in the widely read novels of to-day that is incorrect, and I have seen children's illustrated books of nursery rhymes and fairy stories in which the illustrations of the costumes of the characters represented have been perfect.

In the early part of the eighteenth century, and before that, in England Shakespeare's and other plays were interpreted by actors who wore the cast-off court dresses of the time. Talma, the great French tragedian, Napoleon's favorite actor, in Voltaire's "Brutus" in 1787 was the first to introduce correct costumes and congruity in representation on the French stage. The following story is told of him by Isaac Disraeli in his "Curiosities of Literature."

At the dress rehearsal, after examining his Roman costume, Talma jokingly said: "I have no pockets. Where am I to carry my snuff box? I shall miss it." It had been his custom after a long scene to retire up the stage, and in full view of the audience take a comforting pinch of snuff.

We can learn nothing from the past about stage art, for the productions of to-day have never been excelled. As for the actor's art, it too has improved. We have many more intelligent, good actors than we had formerly, and we have some great ones, but genius is as rare on the stage to-day as it is in all the other arts. There are many artists, but there are no great geniuses that transcend their fellow workers. We are familiar with art; its fundamental laws never change, and perhaps this is the reason why we are satisfied with what art, uninspired by genius, gives us. Genius is more apparent now in finance, science, and invention than it is in art; workers in these fields of useful endeavor supply the requirements of our present civilization. We demand the practical and logical; the human mind has grown critical and cynical, imagination is being crowded out of our mental composition. If we are carried away by emotional impulses we are apt to ridicule our weakness later, or to be ridiculed by

others. Man has gradually changed mentally as he has passed through the past few generations, and he has now arrived at this practical age. After having had a surfeit of the practical he may revert to the poetic; when he does genius will be more plentiful and will give greater expression to art.

CHAPTER VII

Furbish's Fifth Avenue Company, under the management of Charles Furbish, was one of the first combinations to make an extended tour of the cities and larger towns. It was a small, capable company, with Furbish's wife, a popular actress of the day, as its leading woman. Furbish had arranged with Augustine Daly for the use of the title of his company, and for the presentation of such modern plays as had been produced successfully at Daly's Fifth Avenue Theater, New York. Furbish did not carry any scenery, but he did carry numerous special properties, such as framed paintings, bric-à-brac, portières, and panels of different colored silk and satin, which he would attach to any stock drawing-room or chamber scene, and so transform its appearance that the audience would think it a new scene provided for that particular play.

Furbish's success was so great that in a few years all the stars had surrounded themselves with their own companies. Influenced by the rapidly increasing number of traveling companies, towns of from 20,000 to 50,000 popula-

tion began building theaters, which at first were nearly all put on the second floor of buildings that had stores beneath.

To-day it is almost impossible not to find in large towns at least one well constructed theater occupying the ground floor of a large building. These theaters were called opera houses, to overcome a prejudice against theaters that still existed in many sections of the country. People would go to an opera house to see a performance who would not admit, to themselves or to others, that they had been inside of a theater. Now, however, the term opera house, except when applied to a building in which opera is given, is gradually being discarded, and theaters are usually called theaters. Barnum's Museum, on the corner of Broadway and Ann Street, New York City, had halls on each floor in which were exhibited curiosities of all kinds; just off these halls was an auditorium, with a parquet and two balconies, called the Lecture Room, on the stage of which plays were given by a stock company. Boston had its Boston Museum, and Philadelphia its Wood's Museum, which were arranged and conducted in much the same way as Barnum's Museum. Church people would go to see a play in the Lecture Room who would have thought it a sin to enter a theater. All the large cities had minstrel

halls that these same people could attend without self-censure or public criticism, notwithstanding that many coarse and sometimes vulgar jokes were uttered on the stage by the negro minstrels. In some of the larger cities there were one or two variety theaters, generally called "Théâtres Comiques."

These variety theaters were the beginning of the now great vaudeville business. It was at The Comique, in Philadelphia, that Joe Emmett attracted the attention of Charles Gaylor, a well-known manager and playwright of the time, who engaged him for a term of years, and wrote the play of "Fritz" for him. Joseph Emmett, Joseph Murphy, and Lotta were the first performers to graduate from the variety stage and become successful stars in the regular theaters. At that time a distinction was made and observed between "variety performers" and actors of the "legitimate stage," and there was no intercourse whatever between them. The daily meeting-place of actors in Philadelphia was the rotunda of the Continental Hotel; the variety performers never came there; they had some rendezvous of their own. The newspapers at that time observed this same distinction in their publication of stage events, while to-day such a distinction is unnecessary and would be unjust. Many prominent actors,

and even stars, now play short engagements in the vaudeville theaters without injuring their reputations as actors, and some of our best and most popular stars are graduates of the vaudeville stage. Indeed, the vaudeville stage and the cheap price stock companies are good schools for beginners; there is plenty of hard, exacting work to be done in each of them as in the days of the old stock company theaters, and this work is helpful to young aspirants.

From the beginning the traveling companies gave the public better and more complete performances than it had had before, and realizing this, the public gradually withdrew its patronage from those theaters that still continued with stock companies. Therefore in a few years all managers outside of New York were compelled to abandon their stock companies and depend upon the traveling combinations to fill their seasons. As there were not very many traveling companies then, the theaters, even in large cities, would often be closed for five and six weeks during a season for want of attractions. At first none of the traveling companies carried special scenery, but they used what they found in the theaters. The stars, supported by their own companies, played their entire repertoires, and this was necessary even in large cities like Chicago, Cincinnati, and St.

Louis. The programme had to be changed nightly, or at least three or four times a week, as there were not enough theater-goers outside of New York, Boston, and Philadelphia for one play to insure a large business for even a week. John E. Owens, under the management of Theodore Hamilton, was one of the first stars to travel with his own company, and his repertoire consisted of "The Heir at Law," "The Widow's Hunt," "The Victims," "Solon Shingle," "John Unit," and "Caleb Plummer." As he would not play at the Saturday matinées, which were the only matinées given at that time, Florence Noble and I, supported by the company, played either "The Lady of Lyons" or a double bill of "Dreams of Delusion" and a one-act version of "The Taming of the Shrew."

John E. Owens was a great comedian and a most genial gentleman of the old school of actors. Being very fond of the society of young people, he always invited one or more of the young men of the company to take supper with him after the evening's performance. While we were touring the South we played an entire week in small cities like Richmond, Charleston, and Savannah, and we changed the bill every night. While we were in Charleston a fakir was exhibiting an "educated hog"

under a tent, just off the main street. Theodore Hamilton, Charles Norris, and I, passing that way one afternoon, stopped to listen to the fakir, who was crying out to a crowd in front of him, mostly negroes, "Step right in and see the greatest wonder of the age,—an educated hog that can play a game of poker with you, and pick out a card with the name on it of any president of the United States." Seeing us on the outskirts of the crowd, he waved his hand in our direction and said, "Don't miss it, gentlemen; it's the chance of a lifetime, and only ten cents." I said to Hamilton, "Ask him if he passes the profession." When we neared him he repeated, "Only ten cents, gentlemen; only ten cents."

"Do you pass the profession?" inquired Hamilton, with mock seriousness.

"Of course. Do you fellers belong to the show up at the Opera House?"

We answered, "Yes."

"Walk right in, gentlemen. I'll come in and work the hog just as soon as I corral a few more of these niggers."

We went in, and later we saw his show. Then Hamilton gave him a pass to see our performance.

On Sunday morning we left for Savannah, where we were to play the following week.

Some of us were sitting together in the smoking-car, and Mr. Owens was seated in the front part of the car with his back to us, smoking and reading a paper, when the manager of the "Educated Hog" came in and saw us.

"Hello! Are you fellers going to Savannah?"

"Yes."

"So am I. The Educated Hog shows there next week. Say, that man John Owens is great. I'd like to meet him."

Hamilton said, pointing to Mr. Owens: "There he is; go and introduce yourself. Tell him you belong to the profession. He's always delighted to meet brother professionals."

The fakir approached Mr. Owens, who looked up from his paper as he spoke to him, and then moved nearer to the window. The fakir at once sat down beside him, and Mr. Owens held the paper between them while the fakir talked rapidly. Suddenly Mr. Owens jumped up and said:

"D—n you, sir, you're insulting. Let me pass."

He brushed by the astonished fakir and came down the aisle toward us, and when he saw us trying to suppress our laughter he said: "Oh! I understand! A good joke," and added deliberately and emphatically, "I'll not invite one

of you to have supper with me again for a month." Then he hurried into the next car.

The fakir came to us and said, "That old feller Owens is a queer kind of a man."

"What did you say to him?" I asked.

"I told him I saw his show and that he was great. That seemed to please him. Then I told him I belonged to the profession, and that I'd be in Savannah to open to-morrow in opposition to him with my 'Educated Hog.' Then he jumped up and damned me. I can't understand why, unless he was afraid of the business I might do with my hog."

Then the man went to another seat, sat down, and lit a cigar,—to think it over. We had had our little joke, but it cost us our suppers with Mr. Owens for two weeks. At the end of that time, however, he relented and asked us to join him again.

In those days the transacting of the theatrical business was not methodized. Managers of theaters came to New York from different parts of the country in the summer, and booked such attractions as they could secure direct with the managers of the attractions, and many of them returned to their homes with only a half, or a third, of their seasons filled. Few contracts were passed between the parties, and disputes were frequent as to what each was to furnish.

For example, the traveling manager would demand that the theater manager should provide, at his expense, among other things calcium lights as well as supers and "auxiliary ladies," as they were local and still a part of the theater, as in the stock company days.

The manager of the Opera House in Streator, Illinois, was a German butcher, who had his shop and living quarters in the Opera House. The agent sent in advance of Joseph Murphy, an Irish comedian, made a written memorandum contract with this manager that included his furnishing six *supers.* While the members of the company were dressing for the performance the butcher-manager knocked at Mr. Murphy's dressing-room door.

"Come in," called Mr. Murphy.

The manager and his wife entered with a large well filled tray and a pot of steaming coffee.

"Vell, Mr. Murphy, here he is,—all hot."

"What have you there?" asked Mr. Murphy.

"Vot de contract calls for,—six *suppers,* steaks and chops. My wife she cook 'em."

Mr. Murphy laughed and told him to keep them warm until after the performance.

"Oh, you want 'em after de show! I thought maybe you had to eat 'em before you begin your play acting."

Nearly all the managers of opera houses and halls in the small towns had other business interests. The theater manager insisted, when the receipts were divided according to the terms of the contract, that a count of the actual number of tickets in the boxes should represent the receipts, and in that way he secured for himself the money received for tickets sold in advance which, for various reasons, were not presented at the door on the night of the performance. In fact the traveling manager was subjected to all sorts of annoyances and impositions, and he was besought for passes by office-holders and other persons in every town he visited.

At one time Charles A. Gardiner, with an office on Union Square, New York, which was then the "Theatrical Rialto," in a small way represented a number of traveling managers and booked their attractions. Later Joseph Brooks and James B. Dickson entered into a partnership, and, under the firm name of Brooks and Dickson, opened an office on West Twenty-third street. They controlled a number of theaters in Indiana and Ohio as well as in Memphis, and, by affiliation with Thomas Davies, in Detroit; and they also looked after the booking interests of some theater managers in the West. They made several important productions, one of their greatest successes

being "The Romany Rye," which they produced at Booth's Theater. Al Hayman, then manager of theaters in San Francisco, would take a company from Omaha to San Francisco, playing it out and back in such towns as had theaters, and as an inducement to traveling companies he would often pay the railroad fares out and return for a certain percentage of the gross receipts. Then there was H. S. Taylor, who also had an office in New York and was doing the bookings for some towns and attractions.

These were the conditions when the firm of Klaw and Erlanger was established. A year or two later these gentlemen bought out the business of H. S. Taylor, and took C. B. Jefferson into partnership with them.

The time had come when it was necessary to have an exchange conducted by some firm that managers of theaters and traveling companies could trust. At first Jefferson, Klaw, and Erlanger met with some opposition, as to many persons what they proposed to do seemed too radical. It was only a short time, however, before all managers realized that these gentlemen had the right ideas and would thoroughly systematize the theatrical business. They guaranteed to fill every week of a manager's season in the large cities, which compelled

them to make numerous productions of their own, and taken together they were well qualified to grapple with theatrical affairs, which were still in a somewhat chaotic state.

Charles B. Jefferson, while lacking in business acumen, possessed a knowledge of the stage and of play producing, while Marc Klaw and A. L. Erlanger had been active and prominent for many years as agents and managers of traveling companies, having toured the country extensively. They were both convinced from experience and observation that the crude methods of conducting business that then prevailed could not continue. These two men were differently constituted, physically and mentally; each had certain traits that were wanting in the other, and their characteristics when combined were such as to forecast success. The firm, in its several members, represented knowledge of the stage, enery, shrewdness, method, and judgment.

After five years C. B. Jefferson, who was Joseph Jefferson's oldest and favorite son, withdrew from the firm of his own accord, as he himself told me. His father wanted him for his companionship and also to look after his business. Their tastes were similar; they were both amateur painters of merit, and as they were both fond of outdoor sports, they fished

and hunted together a great deal. After C. B. Jefferson's retirement the firm name became what it is to-day; and what the firm of Klaw and Erlanger has accomplished since then is too well known to need any mention here.

I know that what I am going to say about Erlanger will cause a cry of protest from his business opponents, from dramatists whose plays he has declined, and from actors he has refused to engage. I fancy I hear them ask, "Why this eulogy of A. L. Erlanger?" My answer to them is that I write what I know to be true. Erlanger and his associates have encouraged American dramatists and have helped to make some of them rich and famous. The actors have no better friend than Mr. Erlanger, as they will some day know, and he fully realizes that he has made his fortune out of their services. We know a man well only through intimate association; I have been close to A. L. Erlanger and I know him. It was once said in my presence that he was greedy for money, and I contradicted the assertion, for few men care less for money than he does. His success in life has been hard won, by honesty of purpose and by enterprise. Wealth naturally followed, but its attainment was always secondary with him. At a time when the theatrical business was approaching an epoch, when millions

A. L. ERLANGER

Facing page 136

were to be catered to, an organizer of capability and untiring energy was needed to shape its destiny; he appeared in A. L. Erlanger. Few men have been more maligned and misunderstood. His force, authority, and quick decision have caused him to be wrongfully accused of arrogance and abuse of power. Frequently the only way to retain power, after it has been won by honest effort, is to assert it, and men at the head of great enterprises are continually confronted with opposition when, for self-preservation, they must use their power. Mr. Erlanger's friendship is true and lasting, surprisingly so, when one considers how false to him have been many of the men that he has helped to wealth and position. Commercialism is not all in all with A. L. Erlanger nor with Charles Frohman. They always attend the rehearsals of their productions, and their suggestions have often been of value to the dramatist and to the actor. I have found A. L. Erlanger esthetic and scholarly. In his home are numerous works of art that he has collected from time to time, and he has decorated his theaters and equipped his productions with artistic taste. I have spent hours with him in his library. He knows his books; he has thumbed them well, he has absorbed and retained their contents, and recalls names and

events with a memory that is marvelous. His library contains, among other treasures of literature, the largest collection of manuscripts, books, engravings, and prints appertaining to the First Empire in this country, if not the largest collection extant. The building up of this library has been his ruling passion and chief pleasure at times when he was freed from the business cares of his office hours. I doubt if there is any man better informed than he is as to the personages and events of the First Empire and the history of France that led up to and followed it. This subject has been his favorite study. At a time when theatrical interests that had for many years been harmoniously and profitably served seemed as if about to be disrupted the most prominent producing managers of the country met in Mr. Erlanger's private office one evening to discuss the existing situation. After an exhaustive exchange of views by those present Mr. David Belasco arose and said:

"The only man who can successfully handle this situation and to whose charge we may safely trust our interests is Mr. Erlanger."

Mr. Belasco made a motion embodying what he had said, which I seconded. The vote was unanimous that all present would be governed by what Mr. Erlanger decided to do, and would

stand by him to the end. No greater compliment was ever paid to any man by his associates, and that they were right was proved later.

The supposed enormous profits of the theatrical business sometimes look alluring to outside capitalists, but these "angels," as outsiders who back theatrical enterprises are called, usually find that "all that glitters is not gold." The responsible managers of to-day have ample capital of their own to produce all plays that they consider worthy of production and that, to their thinking, promise success. No business is more deceptive and speculative and none less profitable than the theatrical business. The profits of successful plays are large as compared with the capital invested in some particular play, but the profits of the theatrical business, taken as a whole, are small. Mr. Erlanger, who undoubtedly is our keenest observer of the constantly changing theatrical conditions, said, while discussing this subject with me, "For the amount of capital invested, no other business yields so small a profit; it is only a trifle over five per cent." I was surprised, but I accepted his statement, for I knew that he had carefully computed the percentage from information he had at hand covering the

theatrical business of the United States and Canada.

I first met C. B. Jefferson,—Charlie Jefferson, as he was called by his host of friends,—when I was a member of Booth's Theater Company in 1869. He was then just entering upon his career as an actor, and was one of the young men engaged as retainers of the houses of Montague and Capulet in "Romeo and Juliet." He was seven years younger than I was, and my acquaintance with him ripened into one of the most cherished friendships of my life. His was a most lovable nature, and he was sincerely mourned by all who knew him when he died, June 23, 1910, at the age of fifty-seven.

Charlie Jefferson told me some stories of Grover Cleveland, and as Mr. Cleveland was a lover of the theater and a friend of many actors two of these stories may fittingly be related here. Mr. Cleveland was very fond of Charlie Jefferson, and was always eager to have him along on his fishing and shooting excursions, so while Mr. Cleveland was President he telegraphed Charlie at Louisville, asking if he could join him for a few days' duck shooting at one of the club preserves on Chesapeake Bay. Charlie met him in Washington and they left

C. B. JEFFERSON

Facing page 140

together the next day for their outing. Now, Charlie Jefferson was a much better shot than Mr. Cleveland, and Mr. Cleveland acknowledged it. The first day the guides put the President in the best blind,—that is, the one over which the greatest number of ducks usually flew. He made a bag of seventy-two. Reaching the club house first, he had his game laid out on the floor, as a surprise for Charlie, who came in later.

"Well, Charlie," said Mr. Cleveland, proudly pointing to the ducks, "there's my day's work. What did you do?"

"I shot fourteen," answered Charlie.

"What! only fourteen!—and I shot seventy-two! There's something wrong in this. You're a better shot than I am. Oh! I understand,—I'm the President of the United States; they put me in the best blind. To-morrow you shall shoot out of my blind, and I'll shoot out of yours."

Charlie protested, but Mr. Cleveland insisted, saying, "You're my guest; we'll share the sport equally."

The next day the scores were reversed.

One summer while Mr. Cleveland was living at Gray Gables, on Buzzard's Bay, he and Joseph Jefferson decided to go fishing on the Fourth of July in order to escape the noise of the fire crackers and gun fire on shore.

Charlie Jefferson went with them. They fished the ebb tide during the morning without success, and at length Mr. Cleveland said:

"What's the matter with the fish that they don't bite to-day?"

"The reason is plain enough to me," answered Charlie. "You are the President of the United States, and father is its representative actor, but the fish have more patriotism than either of you, for they are close up in shore where they can hear the boom of the cannon."

Cleveland and Jefferson then laid the butts of their rods in the boat with the lines hanging overboard, and began to eat their lunch. About this time the tide changed to flood underneath. While the others were not watching him Charlie, who was in the bow of the boat, took a pack of fire crackers from his pocket, and set them off. Mr. Cleveland and Mr. Jefferson were startled.

"What are you doing? Stop that, Charlie," said his father.

"I propose to be a little patriotic to-day, if you two don't," replied Charlie.

Just then the butts of the rods moved. A fish had hooked on to each line. Mr. Jefferson dropped his sandwich in the boat, Mr. Cleveland stuffed his into his mouth, and they all seized their rods, and each reeled in a fish.

JOSEPH JEFFERSON

As Caleb Plummer

Facing page 143

"Well, Charlie," said Mr. Jefferson, "you see the fish are not all up near the shores."

"No," said Charlie, "I brought some of them here with my celebration."

The fish bit freely for half an hour and then suddenly stopped. After a while Mr. Cleveland laughingly said, "Charlie, if you have another pack of fire crackers in your pocket just set them off."

So much has been written about Joseph Jefferson, before and since his death, that but little is left for me to say. Nevertheless, I should feel that my book was incomplete without some mention of him. Through my intimacy with his son Charlie I frequently met him, as Charlie's late winter home at Hobe Sound, Florida, is about a mile from mine, and Joseph Jefferson came often each winter to visit his son. There were many fishing excursions to Jupiter Inlet and Gilbert's Bar, and I was usually one of the party.

I am the happy possessor of the rod with which Joseph Jefferson last fished. It was presented to me by Charlie as a memento of his father, and it hangs in my bedroom, the joints tied together just as he last handled it. Often as I look at it, it brings him to my mind more

vividly even than do the two photographs of him hanging in the same room, and I sometimes wonder if it misses the grip of the expert angler who so often handled it when playing and landing a fish. This rod is eloquent to me. It tells me a part of the life story of a man who loved to be in the open, in close touch with nature, while he meditated on her beauties and her inscrutable secrets. No one shall ever fish with this cherished rod while I live. It is the most companionable inanimate thing I own. When I hold it in my hands my memories of Joseph Jefferson are more keen, my understanding of his nature more acute than at any other time. I seem then to recall better than at any other time the things he did and said,—the things that influenced me in my estimate of him as a man. He was ever observing. The fantastic shape of some passing cloud, the flight of sea fowl over our heads, the change of the tide, and other phenomena interested him. He keenly enjoyed the fishing, but he did more than fish, as was evident at times when he would call attention to something unusual and comment upon it.

One time, when returning from fishing at Gilbert's Bar and conversing in a serious vein with Mr. Jefferson, I said something that gave

him the impression that I believed in spiritualism. He interrupted me by saying, "Are you a spiritualist?"

"No," I answered. "I have never given the subject serious thought."

"I have," he said. "It's all very mysterious, but I have sometimes thought that there must be something in it. Of course, I don't believe in the charlatans who practice it for gain, but the researches being made by philosophical and scientific scholars deeply interest me. There are mysteries they can't yet explain, but they expect to, and I believe they will. At times when thinking of other matters I have suddenly felt the presence of a departed relative or friend. Why should they have come into my thoughts like a flash, unless their presence influenced my mind?"

These may not have been Mr. Jefferson's exact words, but they are nearly so, and they convey the thoughts he expressed on that occasion.

Joseph Jefferson was a master of the rapidly waning art of refined conversation, and he possessed an almost inexhaustible fund of reminiscences and anecdotes. He was the most effective raconteur I ever listened to, and the gentleness of his nature was apparent, even to those who met him only casually. He had an

excuse for the wrong doings of all men and women; he attributed human failings to circumstances and environment. He said in my hearing:

"I firmly believe that even the brutal murderer who dies on the scaffold will be better off the instant his soul is freed from the contamination of the flesh. The lives of people are usually influenced by the conditions into which they are born. We inherit a great deal that is in our natures from our forbears. There is atavism even in crime."

Here is a story Charlie Jefferson told me of his father,—a story that I have never seen in print. It was well known throughout the country that Joseph Jefferson passed a great deal of time at his easel and that he was an amateur artist, whose work commanded attention and received favorable comment. In many cities where he appeared struggling artists would come to him with a pathetic, or hard luck, story, and request him to buy a "pot boiler." These appeals were never made to him in vain, and the many pictures he would thus buy he would send to his Buzzard Bay estate. One summer's day, while he was at work on a painting in his studio,—which was on the top floor of his house,—there was a knock at the door.

"Come in," said Mr. Jefferson, without turning.

A German who had charge of his place entered and approached him. After a pause the German said, "Mr. Jefferson?"

"Oh, it's you. Well, what is it?"

"Vot you vant done mit dos pictures?"

"Pictures? What pictures?" he asked as he kept right on with his painting.

"Dos pictures vot you sent home last vinter."

"Oh yes,—yes, I remember. Where are they?"

"I put 'em in de storeroom in de stables. Dere must be over one hundred."

"You can leave them there for the present. I'll look them over later."

"Yes, sir; all right."

During this conversation Mr. Jefferson did not look away from his work. The German walked a few steps toward the door, then returned and stood behind Mr. Jefferson, watching him paint. After a pause he again said, "Mr. Jefferson."

Mr. Jefferson turned, slightly vexed at this second interruption, and said, "Well, what is it now?"

"You vill excuse me, Mr. Jefferson, but I don't see why you vant to buy pictures ven you can make 'em yourself."

He then turned on his heel and hurried out of the studio, leaving Mr. Jefferson convulsed with laughter.

The home life of Joseph Jefferson and the affection of his children, relatives, and intimate friends for him are charmingly told by Eugenie Paul Jefferson in her book, "Intimate Recollections of Joseph Jefferson."

The English speaking world knew him as an actor who made his genius felt. I never played with him, but I saw him in all his rôles. His genius and art were never more apparent and convincing to me than in his scene with his wife in "Rip Van Winkle," when he would sit across a chair, with his arms hanging over the back of it, and his back to the audience. During the long tirade of his wife Gretchen he conveyed to the audience the effect upon him of her every word, by the shifting of his body, the movement of his shoulders, the throwing of his clasped hands behind his head, and other pantomimic gestures.

CHAPTER VIII

The fault of the young dramatist is that he is seldom right in his construction and sequences. He may have a strong basic idea for his story, one or more of his characters may be well drawn, his dialogue may be good, but he fails to build his play properly. After he has had some failures he may write good plays. On the other hand, when the play of an experienced dramatist fails it is usually because of the subject, not because the play is not well constructed. The successful dramatist is sometimes tempted to treat some advanced theory or some hobby of his own in his play, and with his knowledge of his craft he endeavors to work out these subjects in dramatic form, so that they will hold and interest an audience. But he seldom succeeds in making such a play effective or profitable. To avoid conventionality, he will sometimes create a dénouement that, while it may be natural and true to life, fails to satisfy because it lacks the element of compensation. Woe to the author who fails to give an audience compensation at the end of his play, regardless of how conventional he may

be! Before the curtain goes up on the last act the audience has decided how it wants the play to terminate, like many readers of novels, who turn to the last page to learn the end before they have read the book half through. Show the audience plainly the natural ending of the story and the fate of the characters involved in it. Don't be ambiguous; don't leave it to the imagination of your auditors,—no two will conjecture alike. If the author ties up the ends of his story logically, the compensation he offers will be generally accepted. The death of Camille was a logical compensation; had she lived there would have been none. I have often heard it said, "Oh! yes, the play's good enough, but I don't like the ending; it is too abrupt." Many lack the imagination to supply what authors merely suggest in the ending of some of their plays. I am not posing as a critic of plays, either good or bad; I am merely giving my impressions,—formed from observation,—of what seems to satisfy an audience and what does not. I am always a good auditor for the dramatist, and he can move me to laughter or to tears, if his comedy has point and his pathos is true. Like most people, I am pleased or displeased without questioning why. If the majority of an audience is pleased, a play is usually successful, for there are enough

satisfied ones to advertise its merits to their friends.

There are no infallible rules for the beginner. He must write plays and keep on writing them, and if he has the necessary qualities to write good ones, he will do so, if he persists. He must necessarily first get the basic idea around which to construct his story. He must tell his story in action as well as in words; his characters must do something besides speak lines. And they must be consistent with the *locale* of his play; he should know them in real life; he should live among them and study their characteristics. In leading up to a situation he must be careful to have his different characters speak the right lines,—only those lines that are in keeping with the characters who speak them. In the rush of writing a scene that terminates in a climax the young author is usually wrong in what he lets his characters say. If the experienced dramatist makes this mistake, his critical faculty detects it, and he will remedy it in the second writing, or at rehearsal. The dramatist must keep his play alive with interest from beginning to end, and he is a clever writer indeed who makes his audience eager to know what is to happen in the following act.

Some managers object to having a play read

to them by an author, but if a dramatist has had plays successfully produced he has a right to insist on doing so. He knows his play, and even if he be a poor reader, he will surely uncover the values in his reading of it that most managers would otherwise fail to discover.

Don't ever read a play to a manager after having dined with him, at his or your invitation. You will not read at your best at such a time, and, no matter how good the play may be, the manager will probably fall asleep with his cigar in his mouth. After having heard a play read it is well for a manager himself to read it carefully a few times,—in order to consider its story, construction, character drawing, dramatic action, surprises, and climaxes. The dialogue is the least important feature of a play to be considered; it need only be "in character." After having carefully considered the play let the manager ask himself: "What is there in this play that the public will pay its money to see and hear?" Even after all precaution has been taken the play may prove a failure; but the manager who follows this rule, —and some do,—will make few mistakes. Familiarity with the works of great dramatists is undoubtedly beneficial to a young writer, as it may help to develop his dramatic instincts, but if he copies too closely the styles and methods

of others he usually produces a play that is unsatisfactory.

The successful dramatist is governed only by those rules that he has learned from individual experience. No two successful dramatists build their plays exactly alike, although each builds his plays properly. Each produces his effects in a way of his own, for the great dramatic moments of a play are the results of inspiration; they cannot be laboriously thought out. This art of playwrighting has much in it that is esoteric, many secrets of its own that are ineffable. The dramatist seeks in vain to explain or understand them, and at times, while writing, he succeeds in grasping and using them. It is his intuition, developed by experience, that enables him to do this rightly. In order to write plays successfully one must be able to tell in a dramatic and convincing manner what happens to a group of characters, to tell it in action, with only enough dialogue to attain that end, and to develop the characters understandingly. The traits of a character in a play should not be described by others; the audience should be able to recognize a character by what the author makes him or her say and do in the play.

Problems do not belong to a play, unless they be problems of life as effected by dramatic con-

ditions, or of human emotions influenced by dramatic events. The introduction of comedy in a serious play is desirable, if the author develops it with characters that are part of the story and that are interested in, or affected by, the telling of it. Under these conditions the contrast is good: the comedy relieves the tension of the serious episodes and makes them more effective. But the writer who injects into a play witty characters that have no part in the story, simply because he thinks there should be a few laughs, makes a mistake, for by so doing he creates an underplot that halts the action of the main plot. Underplots and side speeches are out of date; a good dramatist never uses them. From his central or basic idea the experienced dramatist develops a story that is full enough for a play, and if he introduces surprises, unexpected halts in the action, or comedy, he does so in order to develop dramatically his story and to help its dénouement.

The art of playwrighting cannot be taught. The mistakes of the young dramatist are discernible to his more experienced brothers, and sometimes to the producing manager. If he sees the mistakes that are pointed out to him and is quick to correct them usually he will succeed in writing a good play later; but if he lacks the dramatic instinct to see the difference be-

tween the good and the bad in construction, or is so opinionated that he will not take advice, he is not likely to have his plays produced. The successful dramatist has the right to insist that his play shall be produced as it is written by him, but the beginner is foolish to demand such a thing.

I once received a letter from a friend of mine in Montreal informing me that he had given a gentleman a letter of introduction to me, and about a week later the gentleman called and presented the letter. He was a distinguished-looking Englishman of about sixty. During our conversation I found him to be a scholarly man,—one who had traveled a great deal in different parts of the world and who had studied men and conditions. He was a graduate of Oxford and he had written several plays, none of which had been produced. He brought with him three that he considered the best, and he requested me to read them. During our talk he said: "Even if you fail to like my plays, you will find that they are properly constructed. I know I have at least accomplished that. For years I have made a close study of the plays of all the great dramatists. I have critically dissected their plays and I have learned the methods of these writers and the rules of dramatic construction they observed." I was

so favorably impressed by the gentleman's conversation that I promised to read the plays at once. There were two modern dramas of English life and one comedy of the early Victorian period.

That night I read one of the dramas. In it were at least four characters whose lines when I read them brought the author to my mind. They all talked alike,—learnedly, as he had done in our interview. One character, an old family gardener, was a philosopher who uttered, not the philosophies of a gardener, but of the author himself. The gentleman had laboriously adhered to what he conceived to be the methods of great dramatic authors and the rules that governed them in constructing their plays. What knowledge he did glean, if any, he was unable to apply to the building up of his characters, or to the development of his stories. Both his dramas had the same kind of faults. They were creditable literary works but not dramas. The comedy was fashioned after Sheridan's "School for Scandal," with plenty of bright, witty dialogue, but there was very little contrast in the characters, and no action whatever. What he had studied and thought he had mastered he failed in,—construction,—which experience only can master.

The play of "Mistress Nell," by George C.

Hazleton, Jr., was submitted to me. I read it carefully, and decided that the public would not care for it, but I was mistaken. I believe other managers also refused to produce it. Later, the play came into the possession of that most capable actress, Henrietta Crossman, and the title rôle suited her personality. Moreover, she had had dramatic training. She possessed the ability to interpret the play, and she made it an artistic and financial success. Plays of a different character were then commanding the public's patronage, a fact that influenced me, and doubtless others, in rejecting "Mistress Nell." I now believe that no matter whether musical comedy, comic opera, farce, comedy, or drama be the rage of the hour, there is at all times a profitable opportunity for the unusually good of any of them. The manager who achieves success with one or two plays that he knows some of his brother managers have rejected is prone to believe his judgment almost infallible, and he may consequently make a number of failures in succession.

The dramatist and actor are not unlike in their mental and emotional composition, and many of the characteristics of each are inherent in the other. Each must feel his work. No good play, either tragedy or comedy, was ever written by thought alone. The dramatist must

live with the characters he is writing into his play, while the actor must live in the character he is portraying. The dramatist naturally develops his critical faculty,—his mistakes and failures do that for him,—and the more plays he writes and has produced the quicker he is to discern their faults and correct them. But the actor seldom knows his own faults, for if his attention is called to them he is apt to resent it. When stars fail to draw a large audience they usually blame the play, or the management; or they say that the part, no matter how great it may be, doesn't suit them, but they never express this opinion when they accept great parts to play. When their performances do not go well they attribute it to lack of appreciation and responsiveness on the part of the audience, never to the fact that sometimes they themselves are not at their best.

Some years ago a member of the American Dramatists Club was called upon for a speech at one of the club's banquets, and he said that the trouble with American dramatists was that they were either very lazy or too easily discouraged. He called attention to the fact that Mr. Bronson Howard, who presided on the occasion, had not given the public a new play in three years, and that the only American dramatist who seemed to be hard at work just then was

Clyde Fitch, who was turning out three or four plays a year. The speaker's remarks were not applauded when he took his seat; truth seldom is when it is so pointed. But what he said may have had good effect, for since then several of the budding dramatists that heard him have written a good many very good plays, and some of these plays have even been successfully presented in foreign countries,—even in the countries upon which American managers formerly relied for plays.

Admitting the woman dramatist to membership in the Dramatists Club was wise and timely, for she had become an important factor, and her efforts demanded recognition. She had been, and is still, turning out good plays,—plays that the public likes, and patronizes largely. Such women as Martha Morton, Rida Johnson Young, Marion Fairfax, Lottie Blair Parker, Margaret Mayo, Rachel Crothers, Frances Hodgson Burnett, and others are incessant and effective workers, and their brother dramatists should feel proud to have them as colleagues.

The growth of the American Dramatists Club has been encouraging, and a majority of the successful plays presented in this country during the past five years were written by its mem-

bers. I can recall a time when not more than one or two plays by native authors were produced during a season.

Formerly American managers and stars obtained their plays abroad, usually from England, and many of the English dramatists slipped across the Channel to Paris to pick up the French successes as soon as they were produced. These French plays, published by Levi Frères, were part of the current literature, were largely read, and could be bought for a franc, or less, apiece. Some English authors sold us straight translations, or adaptations of these French plays, as their own compositions. They did the same with Italian, German, and Spanish plays. American managers and actors did not go to Europe often then, as they could not cross the ocean in five or six days as they do now, and they were easy prey for these plagiarists. Tom Robertson, Tom Taylor, and Dion Boucicault were particularly active in this line of work, and their revenues from it were large. A. M. Palmer at one time had several failures in succession at the Union Square Theater, New York. Having a large and expensive stock company on his hands, and needing a new play badly and quickly, he called upon Dion Boucicault to supply one. In less than two weeks

Mr. Boucicault delivered to him "Led Astray," a translation of "La Tentation" cleverly localized.

When I first took Robert Mantell as a star he had for two seasons successfully supported Fanny Davenport in "Fedora," and had made an enviable reputation for himself throughout the country. He was even then a good actor, young and remarkably handsome. It was said that he wore modern clothes on the stage with becoming ease and distinction, and thinking he should be presented in a modern society play, I secured "Tangled Lives," by John Keller, a well known journalist. The play, however, was not financially successful, and I decided to obtain for the following season a new romantic play, or to revive one of the old ones. Louis Nataile read to Mr. Mantell and me "Monbars," which he claimed was an original play. During the reading of the first act the play seemed strangely familiar to me; at the end of the second act I recognized its source, but I said nothing. As the reading progressed Mr. Mantell, becoming enthusiastic, plainly showed it, and when Nataile had finished reading the play, he said: "Secure this play, Gus. Monbars is a great part, and I want to play it." When I asked the author his terms he staggered me by replying, "One thousand dollars in ad-

vance, and ten per cent of the gross receipts." I said I would consider it, and invited him across the street to the Gilsey House to have a drink, when I remarked that the occasion was worthy of a quart bottle, and we all sat down to enjoy it.

As we lifted our glasses to drink I said, "Here's to the success of Monbars." Nataile spoke up: "Ah, you accept my play? You are going to do it?"

"Yes, but not your version. I'm going to Samuel French and Sons to buy a fifteen cent copy of a play I played in a number of times when I was an actor at the Walnut Street Theater,—a play entitled 'The Woman of the Island of St. Tropée,' a translation of d'Enery's 'La Dame de l'Isle de Saint Tropée.' "

Nataile sold me his version at my terms, and Mr. Mantell played it continuously for two seasons, and frequently after that.

Tom Taylor was once outwitted by W. J. Florence and his wife. "The Ticket of Leave Man," translated and adapted by Tom Taylor from the French, was a big success in London, and the Florences happened to be there at the time and saw the play. They learned somehow that, notwithstanding the fact that Tom Taylor advertised the play as an original production, he had taken it from the French. They wanted

to buy Mr. Taylor's version, but they considered his price exorbitant, and the following season they produced the play at Wallack's old Theater, corner of Broome Street and Broadway, New York. Mr. Taylor, through his agents here, got out an injunction to restrain them,—but they gave bonds and presented the play with great success. When the case came up for trial the Florences swore that they had seen a number of performances of the play in London, that they had memorized every word of it, and that they had written down after each performance what they had memorized during the evening. This was possible for two people to do when there was one to refresh the memory of the other. Their lawyer claimed that, as they had memorized the play, it was part of themselves, stored in their minds, their property, and that they had as much right to use it for their advantage as they had to use anything else that they had ever learned. The judge agreed with him and gave a verdict in their favor. So Tom Taylor did not get any American dollars for this play that he had taken from the French.

Fanny Davenport paid Sardou 25,000 francs advanced royalty for "Fedora," and Sardou agreed not to publish the play. By holding it in manuscript Miss Davenport was able to pro-

tect it under the "Common Law" of "Proprietary Rights." After that foreign authors stopped printing their plays, and persons who bought them to be played in this country, as Miss Davenport had done, could prevent any infringement of their legal rights. Since then, through the efforts of the American Dramatists Club, laws have been enacted that furnish ample protection to foreign authors as well as to our own.

After securing a play for production usually the manager's next move is to acquaint the public with the fact through the press; the gatherers of such items of theatrical news are often beginners in journalism, frequently educated young men, many of them graduates of our colleges, who are just taking up their chosen career. The first round of the ladder of modern journalism seems to be the reporting of police court cases, street accidents, and theatrical bits of news and gossip. Some of these young men in time reach the distinction of becoming editors, but many of them find their level as dramatic critics, and these critics are more advertised and more talked about than any other member of a newspaper's staff. I have seen their names on posters,—"So and so says this or that,"—in letters almost as large as the name of the play, and invariably

larger than the name of the author who wrote it. Indeed, it has become the custom, carried to an absurd extent, for managers to quote in their advertisements what these critics say, using their names, and not always the names of the newspapers that employ them. But this paying so much a line for what these writers say is costly advertising. It is not what they think and write that makes or breaks a play,—it is what the public thinks and talks. Newspaper criticism of plays to-day is too often superficial. The critic has to write hurriedly, so as to have his copy ready for publication the following morning, and in order to do this he sometimes is obliged to leave the theater before the last act. His experience may enable him to foresee the dénouement, but he may miss a strong scene, or a dramatic surprise, that might influence him in the writing of his criticism. The critics of the evening papers have more time to devote to their articles, and it is noticeable throughout the country that their criticisms are more exhaustive and profound.

The dramatic critic is also often handicapped for want of sufficient space, and his article is sometimes curtailed. The commercialism of the press governs space; it is too valuable at times to be given up to a lengthy, well-written criticism. Editors seem to demand of dramatic

critics, not a critical analysis of a play, but short, spicy reviews, with a sprinkling of criticism and a bit of sarcasm. The public is not to be instructed but amused. Dramatic criticism as literature is a thing of the past; it finds no place in modern journalism. A good dramatist is the best judge of the merits of a brother dramatist's play, as he is quick to see its construction, characterizations, and dramatic values. The producer's success is made behind the curtain, not from displayed newspaper advertisements with quotations from what friendly critics say. When he has a play that is a success a manager can safely reduce the size of his advertisements in the newspapers, and this was formerly done. In no other country do managers of theaters advertise so extensively as in this. Foreign managers do not believe it is necessary; they know that the audiences they please are their best advertisers. This word of mouth advertising of the public is like an endless chain, and it makes success or failure.

The following week after the first Saturday night in New York, if not sooner, the manager knows whether he has a success or not: the box office tells him, not the newspapers. There is a tendency to overdo theatrical advertising both in advance of a production and during its run. Thousands of dollars are sometimes wasted in

trying to boom a failure. P. T. Barnum once said, "To get the people's dollars you must humbug them," but the theater-going public of to-day cannot be humbugged, and the manager must be sincere and truthful in his announcements. In contrast to P. T. Barnum's methods, I once heard James A. Bailey say: "Let your press agent boom the show all he can, but insist on his telling only the truth. Never put on the bill boards pictorially anything you can't show under the canvas." Mr. Bailey was at one time a partner of P. T. Barnum's, but he was never his disciple. He knew modern demands better, and he realized that the great amusement-seeking public had become sophisticated. For example, when Mrs. Scott Siddons first came to this country she was heralded months in advance as a great actress, who had inherited the histrionic genius of her great-grandmother, the celebrated Mrs. Siddons, whom Sir Joshua Reynolds painted as the Tragic Muse. When Mrs. Scott Siddons opened at the Academy of Music, Philadelphia, in "King René's Daughter," I was in the cast, having been loaned by the Booth's Theater management. The house was packed. She failed dismally; the audience saw that she was only an amateur, and realized that they had been humbugged. Some friendly critics praised her performance, but the people

who had seen it thought and talked differently. Influenced by untruthful publications, they expected to see a great actress; they found her only mediocre, and she played to small audiences during the balance of her engagement. She later met with some success as a reader and reciter, throughout this country and in Canada, but never as an actress. For she was simply a beautiful woman with an historical name, but she had never learned the art of acting.

This over-advertising and inciting of the public's expectations is a dangerous experiment for a manager to indulge in. He may fill his house the first night by arousing public curiosity, but if his offering does not come up to expectation his failure will be all the more pronounced. To publish too much about a play in advance of its presentation is not advisable. You never hear anything about David Belasco's productions until the curtain goes up on them. In this respect Mr. Belasco is a veritable sphinx, much to the disappointment and chagrin of news gatherers. It is much safer for a manager to make a dignified and modest announcement in advance, and let the public find more than it expected.

On opening nights of my productions I have sometimes mingled with the audience as it was leaving the theater after the play, and I have

heard such remarks as: "How did you like it?"—"Very much,"—"So did we." At other times I have heard: "It's no good," —"We didn't care for it." These "first-nighters" do not hesitate to say aloud what they think.

The San Francisco public is proverbial for its disregard of newspaper criticism—it decides for itself. I was in San Francisco at the time when Rose Coghlan,—then under my management,—appeared in her brother's play, "Jocelyn." There was very little advance sale except for the opening night, on which occasion there was over $1400 in the house. The play was new to San Francisco, and the public at large was waiting to have its merits decided by the "first-nighters." The following morning I read the newspaper criticisms, which, on the whole, were good. About ten o'clock I walked up Market street in the direction of the theater, and I heard a gentleman from across the street say to another: "Hello, Charley. Did you see 'Jocelyn' last night?"—"Yes, it's no good."—"That's what I think," agreed the other. A number of people besides myself heard this thoroughfare criticism, and when I reached the theater, although the box office had been opened for over an hour, only a few seats had been sold. About noon time I dropped into the cafés of

some of the hotels where it was then the custom to serve elaborate hot, free lunches to business men, and I heard many remarks that were discouraging. I later called at the cigar store of Mose Gunst, who was a barometer of public opinion on things theatrical. He said, "The people like Rose Coghlan; she's a favorite here, but they don't care for the play." That night the house was less than $400, so on Friday night I put on "London Assurance" for the balance of the week. As soon as this play was announced the people began buying tickets; they knew the play. Friday night the house was again over $1400, and by presenting Miss Coghlan in the old comedies in which she had won her reputation I succeeded in making her three weeks' engagement profitable.

Many theater-goers of to-day are much like the Parisian who was accosted by a friend on the boulevard, as he was returning from the theater in a disappointed mood. "What's the matter with you?" inquired the friend.—*"C'est une soirée manquée."*—He had not liked the play. Our New Yorkers are the same way. They resent the loss of an evening in the theater witnessing a play they don't like, and they make it their business to warn their friends.

The great theater-going public quickly scents a failure and attends only the successes. It is a

surprising fact that a failure in a popular theater, even on a thoroughfare like Broadway, can play to less than fifty or a hundred dollars a performance. One would think that more money than that would just drift into a theater thus located, with its doors open and front brilliantly illuminated, but the people walk by theaters with failures and go to those that have successes. There are no half measures in New York for the producer,—it is either success or failure. The successes show a weekly profit, usually from the start; the failures, a weekly loss. The box office indicates public opinion.

CHAPTER IX

After twelve years of acting I entered into a partnership with W. F. Burroughs, and began my career as a manager. Each of us had saved a little money as actors; we combined our savings,—one thousand dollars,—rented "The Dannichefs" from A. M. Palmer, and lost it all in a few weeks. When we started out we thought that we would surely make money, as we and our wives played the four important parts, which we calculated would make a loss impossible. After this failure Burroughs accepted an engagement to support Madame Modjeska, and I continued to be a manager, on a salary. A few years later I made a contract with Joseph Murphy, the Irish comedian, who was my first star, and during all my years of management, no matter how many attractions I had on the road, one of them was a singing Irish comedian. Following four years of Joseph Murphy, I took W. J. Scanlan, who was with me for seven years, when he broke down with paralysis, that fatal disease which has ruined so many promising stage careers.

I once said to Scanlan: "Billy, why don't

you go straight home to-night and have a good sleep? You know you have two performances to-morrow."

His answer was: "I can't, Gus, I've been amusing the people for the last three hours. I want to go out and be amused by others."

This craving for excitement and amusement after the performance still prevails with many of the people of the stage. They seek their clubs, the restaurants, and the cafés; in this way the amount of sleep that nature requires is lost, and some of them pay the penalty. An eminent specialist, whom I consulted in Scanlan's case, told me that a man might break down physically from dissipation and excess, but never mentally, if he got eight hours sleep out of each twenty-four.

W. J. Scanlan, like Joe Emmett, who also died young, was an actor of great natural ability. His comedy was effective, his pathos convincing, and he was original, creative, and magnetic. With his winsome smile and charm of personality, he won his hearers. Having a sweet tenor voice of some power, he sang his ballads in a way that reached the hearts of the people. And he wrote all the songs he sang on the stage, some of which were the most popular of his time, notably "Peek-a-Boo," "My Molly O," and "My Nellie's Blue Eyes." The

music of "My Nellie's Blue Eyes" was used for "Two Lovely Black Eyes," which was a great song success in England. Even to this day Scanlan is remembered and spoken of throughout the country, and no actor was ever so idolized by the Irish people. Two summers before he broke down I took him and his entire company abroad for a twelve weeks' tour of all the large cities of England, Ireland, and Scotland, excepting London. Although he was entirely unknown, he was favorably received in all the cities where he appeared and his receipts increased with each performance. In Dublin, Cork, and Belfast he created a furore, and had he lived, I certainly should have taken him over again. When he left Liverpool with his company he journeyed straight through to Portland, Ore., for the opening of the following fall and winter season, which was probably the longest jump ever made by a theatrical company.

After the death of Scanlan I engaged Chauncey Olcott to be his successor. As the Scanlan contract had still two years and a half to run, I continued as the surviving partner, and I paid Olcott a salary for two seasons, after which I made him an equal partner and gave him one-half of the profits. He was under my management for nineteen years, until I retired

from business in June, 1912, and during most of these years he was the representative Irish comedian. The field is a profitable one, and he has grown rich.

For a number of years I have closely watched the marvelous growth of vaudeville, and I have observed that with each succeeding year it has become a stronger factor with the public. Its management has been in the hands of shrewd and progressive business men,—men who have been quick to see and grasp its possibilities. Many thousands of persons throughout this country have deserted the regular theater in order to attend the class of entertainment offered in the vaudeville houses, and the consequence is that the theaters have suffered from the falling off of their cheap patrons. The "gallery boy" has become almost unknown; his twenty-five cents no longer flows into the treasury of the regular theater.

It is sometimes said that vaudeville has about reached its limit, but I think otherwise. I feel that before long in some large theater we shall see this style of entertainment on a much more extensive scale, with prices ranging from ten or fifteen cents to two dollars, according to the location of the seats. Instead of performances costing at most five or six thousand dollars a week, as they do now, some manager will

present entertainments that will cost ten to twelve thousand dollars a week to stage. The programme will probably consist of a comic opera or a musical comedy, followed by a short drama, farce, or comedy, each interpreted by the best available talent, and will conclude with star specialty acts and the latest thing in moving pictures. Vaudeville's opposition to the regular theater will then be even greater than it is now. The building of new theaters throughout the country, and particularly in New York city, is being overdone at the present time. Many of these theaters will, of necessity, be converted into vaudeville, as there are not enough successful plays to supply the theaters now existing nor enough high-priced patrons to support them.

I have met intimately only one vaudeville manager, and because of my admiration for his character and achievements, I shall write of him here. I refer to Mr. F. F. Proctor. My acquaintance with him began many years ago when he was associated with me in the production of "Across the Potomac." F. F. Proctor's record is clean, and he has the respect of all who know him or who have dealt with him. As some of our great steel magnates started their career stripped to their waists at the furnace, and as other men who are now at

F. F. PROCTOR

Facing page 177

the head of great affairs have passed through the trials of manual labor, so F. F. Proctor rose to his position of to-day from being a juggler who juggled barrels and globes. All thinking men honor their fellows who have risen to the top from humble occupations. These men, with meager opportunities for early education, acquired knowledge by observation and reading, and so trained their minds that they were able to reach and retain positions of importance.

A man can win no greater compensation than to have it said of him that his career was one of honorable dealings,—dealings in which his word once pledged was kept. This has been often said, and will be said to the last, of F. F. Proctor.

When I was a member of Booth's Theater company twice a month there were social gatherings on Sunday nights at the house of Fanny Morant, who played such parts as the nurse in "Romeo and Juliet," the queen in "Hamlet," and Lady Macbeth. These were delightful gatherings and they usually broke up about midnight, after a cold supper. Edwin Mollenhauer, the musical director, would bring his violin and frequently a few of the musicians of his orchestra; Edwin Booth now and then joined this circle of his intimates, when, unre-

strained, he seemed to enjoy thoroughly his respite from the cares of his theater, and Oakley Hall, then Mayor of the City of New York, was often one of the party. These gatherings were never large; there were seldom present more than twenty to thirty persons,—all actors, operatic singers of note, and men and women known in literature and art. There were flashes of wit, friendly exchanges of repartee, discussions of art subjects, singing, and instrumental music. Introductions were seldom required, as nearly everybody present had met the others before. On one occasion Edwin Adams, with his exuberance of spirits, keen wit, reminiscences, and mimicry, kept the party laughing continuously; his grotesque imitations of actors and his burlesquing of Edwin Booth, in "The Fool's Revenge," were extremely funny. I never saw Mr. Booth laugh so heartily as he did that evening. He and Edwin Adams were very fond of each other, each addressed the other as "Ed" and "Ned," and their close friendship was, perhaps, due to the fact that they were entirely opposite in disposition and mentality.

The opportunity exists to-day for some of our prominent actresses to revive those charming gatherings of the past,—such gatherings as were brought together by Grace Greenwood and Fanny Morant. They are still green in my

memory, and I learned a great deal from my association with the people that attended them.

The social advance of the actor from the days when he was proscribed as a vagabond to his present status is unique. In a little over a century his calling has become a respected and honorable one, and its worthy members are received everywhere. Many of them have been honored by "crowned heads" and some have been knighted. Puritanism is dead; the masses, with the opportunities of education, have learned to read, to think, and to know, so that a broader-mindedness, a more liberal view, now exists. Even the church has come to acknowledge the beneficial influence of the drama, and some denominations have even affiliated with the stage. These are truly the "palmy days" of the actor: he is no longer condemned for his calling, but gauged by his individual worth; his livelihood is no longer scant and precarious. Mr. Joseph Jefferson said to me only a short time before he died: "Not many years ago the theater meant for the stock actor merely a living; for the successful star, a modest fortune, and for most managers, bankruptcy. But it is different now." He was right,—it is different now. Capable actors receive large salaries, the provident ones own their homes and have sav-

ings in the bank, and the successful stars and managers are all wealthy. The theater to-day is a powerful factor in the world's doings, both artistically and commercially; responsible managers find no more difficulty in discounting their paper at the banks than do responsible merchants; the actor finds no bar to social intercourse,—to-day he has his clubs where he meets men of other callings. His lot was quite different many years ago when he had but a few resorts where he met only those of his own profession.

I have sometimes questioned whether this social betterment has helped the actor in the perfecting of his art, or whether it has been a detriment to him. Those who are strong enough to resist the allurements of this wider social sphere, who use their clubs for recreation, and not dissipation, will not neglect their art; they will advance and succeed. And the weaklings, who would stumble and fall in any walk of life, remain mediocre for all time. The membership of these clubs nowadays is composed of men of many callings. Of course the actor's intercourse with non-professional members may cause them to take an interest in his career, but it is likely too to destroy the illusion of his stage work. The members of his club know the *man* so intimately that they must

naturally be less impressed by the *actor* when they see him behind the footlights.

The establishment of a school, such as David Belasco proposes, to teach the art of acting to young men and women of education and refinement is greatly needed, and will surely show beneficial results. No man is better qualified than Mr. Belasco to teach what he himself so thoroughly knows. The numerous schools of acting that now exist are commercial; the pupils pay for their tuition,—and the teacher has his or her living to make. Consequently pupils who have not the slightest dramatic ability are encouraged to continue as long as they are able to pay. Discipline is lax, and trivial excuses are accepted for irregular attendance. Mr. Belasco, with his discernment in discovering unusual ability, will surely weed from his class the impossibles; of the remainder he will demand regularity of attendance and work. His undertaking is a worthy one, and I predict for him a success that probably no other manager could achieve. He has made many good actors and actresses, and he will make many more. I lately witnessed his play "Peter Grimm." It is a classic. Had it been written by a Frenchman and produced in Paris, it surely would have been honored by the "Academy." David Belasco succeeded in presenting in a play

the subject of spiritualism in a dramatic and absorbing form,—a thing that the great French dramatist Victorien Sardou failed to do.

While I was watching David Warfield's performance of "Peter Grimm" the possibilities of this actor forcefully presented themselves to my mind. I have seen him in every part he has played since he became a star, and even before that, when he was in vaudeville. The best in this actor has not yet been brought out. I should like to see him play King Lear and Shylock, under the able direction of Mr. Belasco, for his face is suitable, and would aid the effective make-up for either part. Moreover, he possesses many of the psychical qualities inherent in both King Lear and Shylock, and, more than all, David Warfield is an actor of genius. But he needs some great part in which he can make his genius known and felt.

"Actor-managers" in this country have not been financially successful in the past forty or fifty years. By "actor-managers" I mean actors who continued to act, and at the same time leased theaters in order to manage them, or stars who have tried to manage their own tours. Lester Wallack did not manage his own theater; its managerial head was Theodore Moss. Dion Boucicault leased Booth's Theater

for a short term and lost a small fortune. John Brougham and many other actors tried management and failed. In all my experience I cannot recall a single star who under his or her own management was successful. Many who claimed to be their own managers had their tours directed and their affairs looked after by a husband, a brother, or an employed capable business manager. Some of these stars were successful. But the traits and qualities necessary for business success are the reverse of those required by art: an artist might, in a moment of disappointment, destroy his painting because it had been unfavorably criticized, or refused a conspicuous place on the walls of the Salon; but a business man would endeavor to sell it. Stars, at the outset of their careers, often feel keen disappointment because in some city or town the public apparently lacking appreciation of their efforts fails to patronize them. They usually want to cut these cities and towns out of their routes, but their managers often keep on presenting them in these objectionable localities, until, in most cases, they establish them as favorites. Artists usually lack commericialism; they are not good buyers or sellers in the world's marts; indeed the business acumen of most actors is limited to obtaining an increase of salary, or, if they are stars, a larger

percentage of the profits. In demanding this most stars do not consider the financial risk taken by the manager who introduced and established them. If once they secure a large patronage, the management is secondary in their estimation; they think that behind the curtain they do all the work that makes for profit. Many actors who were once profitable stars and who for slightly better terms frequently changed their managers are now working for salaries. I could name a dozen or more.

It is true that even to-day in England a number of "actor-managers" are successful, but even they are "actor-managers" only in name. They all have experienced business men associated with them, as had Henry Irving in Bram Stoker. There are no successful "actor-managers," properly speaking; there cannot be. A capable actor will fail as a manager as surely as a capable business man will fail as an actor. People win success in only those callings for which they are psychically constituted.

I have sometimes in fancy divided the men and women I have met, broadly speaking, into two classes. In the first class I have grouped the actor, the writers of romance, the poet, the musician, the painter, the sculptor, and the dramatist,—people of impulse, with meager foresight, who when they fully grasp a truth of

life's mysteries do so through intuition, not by a mental process of delving for it. Their power of will is not strong, and they are easily influenced. An appeal to them for sympathy or aid will be answered without the use of judgment, which in them is a minor faculty. Opportunities come to them that are often too lightly considered, and thus their advantages are missed; they feel most keenly the greatest joys and the greatest sorrows of life; and they contribute all that is most beautiful and refining to the human race, yet they give but little of that which is of practical value to it in its solving of great problems. These latter results are achieved only by the protracted mental labors of the other class, to which belong the scientist, the financier, the doctor, the lawyer, the astronomer, the inventor, and those engaged successfully in great commercial enterprises,—men in whom critical faculty, judgment, and will-power predominate, men who are sincere, often big of heart, but whose emotions are held in check by judgment. If an appeal is made to them, its worthiness is considered before they respond, while the disappointments of their lives are viewed philosophically. My pleasantest hours have been passed with the former class; my occupation has thrown me into close contact with its members, and among them I

have found nearly all my comrades and dearest friends. Therefore I am happy that my journey through life has been along the same paths as theirs. Like them, I have sometimes suffered keenly, and, like them, I have enjoyed life.

THE END

C 1

Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: Oct. 2007

Preservation Technologies
A WORLD LEADER IN COLLECTIONS PRESERVATION
111 Thomson Park Drive
Cranberry Township, PA 16066
(724) 779-2111

WERT
BOOKBINDING
Grantville, Pa.
Jan.—Feb., 1987
We're Quality Bound

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 010 638 747 3